

## **Ark Volume 14**

### **Act 1: Pet Dog**

[TL Notes: I made a small edit to the previous chapter. The skill slots for Racard's blood-sucking skill increased to 2, not by two.]

Also for those who don't know what 'chaebol' is when it is mentioned in this chapter. It is like a family lead huge corporations commonly found in South Korea. If you want more information then you can look it up in google.]

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Shortly after Karakul met his end.

According to the rules of a vampire's duel, Racard inherited all of Karakul's possessions. It meant the Karakul's territory, castle and the Bloody subordinates all belonged to Racard. The Bloody swiftly changed their attitude after the duel finished.

"Oh, the shining charisma, it is wonderful!"

"As expected, the people who make their own fortunes are different."

"It will be a great honour to serve such a fine Lord."

"I thought it would be like from the beginning."

"I'll offer my whole body to our Lord."

The Bloody prostrated themselves on the ground and shook their tail. They didn't seem like subordinates who had served Karakul for 100 years. Well, the Bloody and Karakul's relationship wasn't one of loyalty but was more like a forced blood contract.

"Earl..... Earl Racard...."

Racard looked like it still hadn't sunk in. But after a moment, his face brightened as the Bloody continued praising him.

"Earl, yes I am now an Earl. Hahaha, this castle is also mine! Everything is mine! Hahaha. Eh? What's that nasty stuff? Why is it in my room?"

Racard looked around the room and frowned as he saw a black lump. Then one of the Bloody twisted its hand and replied.

“Yes, that is Karakul who was the previous Lord.”

Karakul had been a powerful vampire who controlled portions of the Dark Earth. However, the triple combo of the cross, garlic smell and illumination had turned him into unrecognizable ashes. Racard farted at the Bloody’s answer and muttered.

“Bah, what are you guys doing? This is my room. Quickly remove the mess. Clean up the room.”

“Yes, I understand. I’ll remove this messy thing.”

The competent Bloody was also a professional maid so the room was quickly cleaned up. The broken household goods were removed while the various blood spots were neatly polished. Then the strong vampire Karakul was separated into non-flammable trash and dragged out. It was a world where losing was truly disastrous.

“Huhuhu, I’m an Earl.....should I talk like an Earl?”

Racard sat down in the chair used by Karakul and laughed. Then he spoke to Ark and the Wolrang.

“Ah, did you see? Did you see? I’m now an Earl. But there’s no need for you to be tense. I’m not an authoritarian vampire. In addition, I’m thankful to the Wolrang who helped me. So you can live comfortably. Hahaha!”

However Ark didn’t feel like laughing.

‘Damn, this is bad.’

Ark sighed with a mixed expression. Of course, Racard’s evolution was an inspiring event for Ark. 170 total stats were added when Racard evolved. It was like he gained 17 levels at once. However, the important thing for summons wasn’t the level but the ranking. Recently he learned that the ranking that appeared in a summons’s information window wasn’t simply a classification.

The combat ability of monsters wasn’t just determined by their level or stats. A user’s skill was affected by the ranking of the skill. This was also applied to the monster rating system. A monster’s skills, agility and ability to cope with different situations would depend on the ranking. That’s why a level 80 user could fight against a level 100 monster without difficulty. However, it wouldn’t be that easy for the user if they were dealing with a level 100 intermediate monster. If the monster was in the advanced ranking then its power would increase by approximately 20 levels and a party might be required to hunt it. It was one of the reasons why Ark

used Racard's satellite surveillance mode in battles. Most of the monsters Ark was currently dealing with were intermediate ranked. Because Razak also involved, he now had two intermediate ranked summons.

But he wasn't entirely happy about Racard evolving to an intermediate rank. If Ark attacked an intermediate ranked monster, the damage wouldn't be applied or not all of it will be applied. On the other hand, there was a possibility of receiving additional damage if he was in a critical condition. The rankings of the monsters would also increase in the higher level regions. It would be impossible to exert his full power no matter how much he raised his stats through food. In the end, the evolution of his pets was necessary if he wanted to use them in higher level regions. It was the reason Ark chose evolution even though he could raise their stats through food.

'Anyway, Racard has an intermediate ranking now. There will be no penalties applied if we face an intermediate monster.'

It meant that he could use Racard more aggressively in fights.

'There is also an additional skill slot in Blood-sucking.'

Until now, there had only been one skill slot for Blood-sucking so it was very inconvenient. If he wanted to preserve the skill saved in the slot then he couldn't use Blood-sucking. Now that there were two slots, he could divide it into one slot to use and one to save. It also had a 10% probability of blocking a random skill. Ark had experienced the effect of blocking skills through Karakul so he was aware of its power. Although it blocked a random skill so luck was needed, it could be used to properly neutralize the enemy.

'Blood Lane is also a wide area curse magic!'

The evolution was undoubtedly successful.

'Okay. Karakul is defeated and my pet evolved into Racard.....everything is good. But.....'

Ark released a sigh and looked at Racard absent-mindedly. No, he looked at Racard who was now wearing a red tuxedo. The reason Ark was dissatisfied was because of the tuxedo.

Blood Red Tuxedo (Rare)

Armour type: Special Costume

Durability: 23/60

Defense: 30

Weight: 15

User restriction: Vampires only

A vampire's tuxedo dyed in his favourite colour, blood red. It appears to be clothes that Karakul who possessed great power preferred and is a luxury clothing using the finest fabrics. There aren't many vampires who wears such luxury tuxedos in Dark Earth. The dignity of the vampire will increase just by wearing this.

<Option: Stamina +5, Wisdom +10>

<Special options: Dignity of a vampire increases by 30%. A vampire's dignity has an influence on the effect and success rate of vampire exclusive skills. The effect of and success rate of Blood-sucking and Blood Lane will increase by 15%>

'The rare item I got was exclusively for vampires.....'

The vampire wasn't a race that users can select. In addition, Ark was the only user who can summon vampires. In other words, the vampire-only items were created exclusively for Racard. Of course, Ark was also intending to gather equipment for his summons.

'But why did a boss monster drop a rare item for my pets?'

He would be able to receive hundreds of gold from rare items if it wasn't a vampire exclusive item. Now he had to equip all of them on Racard! Ark felt anger well up as he saw Racard wearing the tuxedo.

'First I had to spend 700 gold on a summoning port and now I have to give a rare item to my pet? Am I a chaebol? What the hell? Why was there suddenly so many maintenance costs on my pets? On the other hand, Racard has become a Lord.'

In this situation, it was impossible for Ark not to consider profit. Ark bit his lips before a brilliant idea popped into his head.

'Wait, this castle? Aha, I see.'

Ark's eyes shone brightly as he looked around the room. Karakul was quite a well off vampire in Dark Earth. Like most vampires, he had a lot of items that appealed to his vanity. There were quite a few unnecessary paintings and statues. And the

current owner of those decorations was Racard! Ark thought of an idea and smiled wickedly at Racard. In the meantime, Racard had lost his sassiness and became more arrogant.

“Haha, that’s right. I’m already an Earl! Dedric used to only live in a small hideout and now I am an Earl! Ohhhh, look at me now!”

Dedric who had abruptly risen in the hierarchy seemed to think he had become the founder of a new religion. It was so absurd that he couldn’t help but laugh.

“Ohhhh, hooray Earl Racard!”

“We swear allegiance to the new Lord!”

“We’ve never mentioned it but we never liked Earl Karakul.”

Dedric became even more arrogant after hearing the Bloody’s reactions.

“Huhuhu, lower your heads even more!”

“Hey Racard.”

Then Ark approached.

“What? What bastard dared call my name so informally.....Hik, M-Master!”

“Oh, aren’t you arrogant? Have you become so big that I can’t say your name anymore?”

“No, that’s not it.....”

Despite being an Earl, Racard was still Ark’s summon. The suffering that Racard received after evolving into Dedric and becoming cocky had been carved into his bones. Racard thought that Ark was going to beat him up again and stuttered while shrinking back.

“I didn’t know it was Master. Really.”

‘Yes, the mental training I gave before is still working.’

Ark liked Racard’s expression.

‘I was looking for signs that he had become cocky again after evolving but now’s not the time for that.’

"Well, okay. You went through some trouble this time so I won't find faults in such a trivial thing."

Racard gave a relieved sigh at Ark's words. Then Ark muttered something.

"Anyway, I feel good that you've been promoted. By the way, who was it thanks to?"

"Eh? T-that.... Thank you very much."

"Is that so? You're grateful?"

Ark smiled and put his arms over Racard's shoulders.

"Then I'll just say something comfortably."

"Huh? What are you saying? What?"

"I'll sum up the situation. You're thankful to me.... You have hundreds of subordinates and this nice castle because of me. But what about all the trouble I went through? I got nothing. Don't you think it is too terrible? It is troublesome getting nothing after going through all of that."

"Eek? B-but....."

"It's okay, it's okay. You don't have to give me any money."

Ark looked around the area and spoke in a coy voice.

"Just a few souvenirs from your castle will do....."

"S-souvenirs?"

"A few of the paintings hanging here and some sculptures. Anyway, you have no interest in such things. You'll just leave it to rot so I'll take it as a commemoration. How about it? Is that okay? Your castle will be clean and I'll receive some nice souvenirs. Anyway, you should do something for me or else you'll start to feel troubled. Isn't that right?"

In other words, it was a subtle threat. That's right. This was Ark's ulterior motive. The pictures and sculptures inside the castle were just decorations. However, decorations like these could be traded as goods to merchants. In other words, decorations could also be sold as goods despite having no additional effects. Ark's ulterior motive was to pack the decorations away and sell them. Racard finally noticed Ark's motive and jumped with surprise.

"B-but Master...."

"What? Don't tell me it's really valuable?"

"No, rather than it being valuable.... It's still....."

"Bah, okay. If you behave like this then I have no choice but to act dirty too."

The smile had disappeared from Ark's face.

"Okay. Let's do some calculations. Do you know the expenses?"

"The expenses?"

"Let me explain it to you. Do you know how much money I spent on you? How much food have you eaten from me? But there's even more? Do you know how much money went into the summoning port? How much money was needed for the support tools to defeat Karakul? Whose pocket do you think it came out of?"

"T-that....."

"Until now I've never even said a word about it. But you're behaving so dirty just for a few decorations? Then clearly I have to receive the necessary expenses from you. Should I calculate how long you should be beaten up? Do you want me to become a person who collects your debt? I'll use whatever it takes to receive it."

The blood drained from Racard's face as Ark continued speaking. Racard was well aware of how petty and vicious Ark could be in regards to money. Ark would think of it as being robbed of the decorations. It would be impossible to withstand him. Racard was a vampire so he also wanted the decorations, but his many experiences eventually made him lift the white flag.

"Okay, I understand. Take it, just take it."

"Huhuhu, I thought you would follow me advice."

Thus the ownership of the castle's decor was transferred to Ark. First NPCs and users, now Ark was at the level of robbing his summons.

'Considering everything I spent on this battle, I won't earn that much even after selling all the decorations. A few hundred gold at most? But it still won't compensate for everything that I spent. If I lack money in the future then I'll have to control Racard even more.'

Ark finally finished threatening his summon. The Wolrang elder watched him blankly before speaking in an impatient voice.

“Ark, is now the time to be doing this?”

“Ah, that’s right.”

Ark finally remembered his purpose. The real reason he defeated Karakul wasn’t Racard’s evolution. His purpose was to reclaim the Wolrang’s fragment of the Three Marvels, the Moon Piece.

“Obviously the Moon Piece is hidden somewhere in this castle.”

“I already know where the Moon Piece is.”

The Moon rock had managed to absorb the moon’s power despite no moonlight being able to penetrate the Dark Earth. So the Moon Piece must be hidden in the underground workplace. At that time, the magic of the Moon rock ran out and the Wolrang changed back to people. Despite the Wolrang changing back to humans, Racard was now the Lord so there were no problems with the Bloody. Ark, Racard and the Wolrang walked through the castle and arrived at the underground slave pens.

‘Now, where is the Moon Piece hidden?’

Ark surveyed the labour area with expectant eyes. The underground area was very wide. Karakul was also never hide the treasure in a place it could easily be found. It wasn’t easy to find the Moon rocks when his skills had been sealed by Chain of Blood but now he could use Magic Detection. The Three Marvels was an object filled with a lot of magic. It wouldn’t be a problem to find it even if it was buried in the ground. The ground was also filled with Moon rocks so he could utilize the Wolrang to find the Three Marvels.

‘I can kill two birds with one stone and collect the Moon Piece and Moon rock at the same time.’

The Moon rocks weren’t worth that much money but 1 copper was still money! Money was strewn all over the ground so Ark couldn’t just leave it alone. Just as Ark was about to use Magic Detection.

“Huk, t-that guy is.....?”

Suddenly the elder’s nose twitched before he turned around and saw something. The Bloody had a guard post where they monitored the slaves. Yet one guy was

shovelling like crazy at the guard's post. The Wolrang confirmed his face and raised their voice.

"He is Albert!"

Ark turned around at the Wolrang's voice. It was the young man who was the traitor of the Wolrang family, Albert. Albert focused his attention on Ark and the Wolrang before muttering.

"Sheesh, they're already here.....!"

"The clan's traitor, you were hiding in a place like this?"

"Catch him. We can never forgive him!"

The Wolrang yelled with excited voices and started running. But Albert didn't run away. 10 Wolrang were heading towards him. Although he was about to be caught by them, why did he have no intention of escaping and just continued shovelling?

'What is it? That Albert..... Shouldn't he know that Karakul died? Then why didn't he run away immediately? And why is he shovelling.....?'

Ark belatedly realized the reason after looking at Albert.

'Wait, that guy is.....!'

"We got you!"

"Pay the price for disgracing the clan's honour!"

Meanwhile the Wolrang had ran several hundred metres and tackled Albert. It was at that time. A dim light appeared in the centre of the pile of Wolrang before the 10 Wolrang were thrown back in different directions. Then a shadow shot out like an arrow and instantly moved dozens of metres. The identity of the shadow that had hit the Wolrang was Albert. But he wasn't the previous Albert. Just like the Wolrang, his form was that of a huge wolf with his silvery mane fluttering behind him. The Wolrang clan looked at the stone Albert was holding in his hand before screaming.

"Moon rock? No, that's.... The Moon Piece!"

As expected, it was hidden in that place? In fact, Ark had already guessed the location of the Moon Piece before arriving there. It had to be buried in a safe place where the slaves wouldn't find it. There was only one such place. Wasn't it the place monitored by the Bloody? That was the reason why Albert hadn't ran away and instead started digging in the underground workplace. Anyway, he couldn't run far

away while in the form of a human. If so, Albert would rather take a risk and find the Moon Piece which would make him more powerful.

“T-that guy!”

“The clan’s treasure is in the hands of the traitor.....!”

“Kyakyakya, foolish bastards. You thought I would just take it lying down?”

Albert bared his sharp fangs. The Wolrang looked fearful but Ark just scratched his head.

“What? Is this guy stupid?”

Of course, Albert was a lot stronger when transformed into a silver wolf than when he was a human. And transforming with the Moon Piece was a lot different than transforming with the less powerful Moon rock. Thanks to the influence of the Moon Piece, the Wolrang were able to fight evenly with Karakul despite the effects of Dark Blood. But the Wolrang clan also transformed into wolves when the Moon Piece appeared. In addition, there was only one exit from the underground workplace. No matter how strong Albert was, how would he manage to defeat the other Wolrang who also transformed into wolves to escape?

It would be the same even if the Wolrang wasn’t there. All the Bloody inside the castle was already Racard’s subordinates. Ark was also blocking the exit. The likelihood of Albert escaping safely was only 0.0001%. In other words, Albert had caused his own loss.

“Well, you should be grateful for surviving this long. This wolf bastard has no manners. Having difficulty because of you..... I’ll make you into finely minced pork.”

Ark took one step forward with the intention of breaking Albert’s bones. Then Albert opened his mouth and muttered.

“Stop! If anyone takes one more step then I’ll swallow the Moon Piece.”

“Ah, this is completely tiring. Is that what you call a threat? Do you have that much confidence in your digestion ability? Would you like to try it? I’ll split you in half before you can digest the Moon Piece.”

“W-wait a minute.”

The elder suddenly interrupted Ark.

"Albert..... No, it will be a serious problem if any of the Wolrang swallows the Moon Piece."

"Eh? He really can digest the Moon Piece in seconds?"

"The Wolrang receives their power from the moon so if a Wolrang swallows the Moon Piece then he will overflow with magic and transform into a difficult monster. He will turn into the god Fenrir. We can't afford to have Albert transform into Fenrir....."

The elder broke into a cold sweat as he spoke and shook his head.

"But that is not the only problem."

"It's not?"

"If the Moon Piece runs out of power then it will turn into an ordinary stone. Of course, it is the clan's treasure so it will recover if it receives moonlight but it might take 10 or 20 years to recover. That Albert, I never thought he would use this method."

The elder muttered. Now Ark's face became serious. In fact, he didn't feel it was that serious if Albert transformed into Fenrir. He might be a god but he was still a monster. There were hundreds of Wolrang and Bloody present. No matter how great the monster, it couldn't deal with all those troops alone. However, it would be a huge problem if the Three Marvels lost its power.

'It'll take 10~20 years to regain its power? Then even if I obtain the Moon Piece, I can't receive my bonus abilities or find a clue to change to my second stage profession?'

"Kyakyakya, now do you understand the situation?"

"You bastard!"

Ark stepped towards Albert who moved the Moon Piece to his mouth.

"Didn't I tell you? I'll swallow it if you take even one step."

"If you swallow the Moon Piece then you'll become an irrational monster."

"Bah, I have no other choice now that Karakul has been defeated. This is my plan of desperation. If I turn into Fenrir then I'll pull you all to hell. Of course, the Moon Piece will also become an ordinary stone as a result."

"T-that bastard....!"

"Elder-nim, don't listen to him."

"We have to tear that kind of fellow to pieces."

The Wolrang shouted with agitated voices. At that moment, Ark sighed and took out a thin piece of paper.

"....What do you want?"

"Kyakyakya, I knew you would agree. As expected from humans. It is different from the foolish wolves who would risk their limbs for honour. I understand your intentions."

Albert laughed and stated his requirements.

"I know that Seutandal has rose to middle earth. In that case, there is no reason to stay in a place like this. First of all, I'll request some security. I don't want anyone to follow me when I leave Dark Earth for middle earth. And money. I'll need money if I'm expected to live as a human on middle earth. 5000 gold. Prepare 5,000 Gold right now."

Albert talked like a terrorist holding hostages captive. In fact, Albert actually had a hostage in the form of the Moon Piece.

"Wait, what about the Moon Piece?"

"Make one of the children of the Wolrang accompany me. Once I've safely migrated to middle earth with money, I'll give the Moon Piece to the child. Because there is no need for the Moon Piece once I leave Dark Earth."

"How do I know you'll keep your promise?"

"Whether you believe me or not is fine. But do you have any other choice?"

Albert opened his mouth and threateningly moved the Moon Piece in and out. Why did he have to be threatened by a wolf who sold himself as a salve to Karakul? It felt like his blood pressure was rising to 300 every time Albert threatened to swallow the Moon Piece. But he didn't know what would happen to his second class change.

'However, I can't just accept that guy's request.'

5000 gold. He had to give 5000 gold to that bastard? Currently Ark didn't have that kind of money. Even if he did, he had no intention of giving it to the wolf. If he

accepted the terms then what reason would Albert have to keep his promise? No, he was 100% certain that Albert wouldn't keep his promise.

'This brat, does he think I'm stupid?'

If Ark was thinking from Albert's point of view, there was absolutely no way he would give back the Moon Piece. Albert had said that the Moon Piece would be unnecessary when he crossed into middle earth. But they were unexpected words. Of course the Moon Piece wasn't necessary to transform. However, it was the only weapon he had to protect himself from Ark and the Wolrang chasing him. Who would give such a weapon away so easily?

'I can't just let him swallow it..... Okay. I'm also going to use a desperate plan.'

Ark sighed with a gloomy expression while communicating with Racard.

'Racard. I'll attract his attention so hide yourself and approach from behind. That guy will only pay attention to me and the Wolrang. You won't be noticed if you turn into a bat and sneak up from behind. Seize the Moon Piece when he is caught off guard.'

Racard had a worried expression after Ark finished talking. Although he managed to defeat Karakul and became an Earl, he had no confidence against Albert who had turned into a wolf.

'There's no need to worry. This is the Dark Earth. If the situation deteriorates, he won't dare kill you in case he enrages the Lord.'

Racard's expression became relieved. After a brief moment, he smiled and spoke.

'I understand. As long as you decide not to take all my decorations.'

'What?'

Ark frowned as he heard Racard's voice in his ear. However, Racard pretended to know nothing as he looked into the distance and whistled. He was trying to profit from his Master's crisis? A pet trying to rob its owner.....

Anyway, Ark wanted to use Dark Blade on Racard but couldn't in this situation. If Albert swallowed the Moon Piece then the decorations would be the least of his problems.

'Okay. But you definitely need to get it.'

'Okay.'

Racard enthusiastically answered, turned into a bat and approached Albert from behind. Meanwhile, Ark used various excuses to attract his attention and waste time.

"It can't be helped. I accept your requirements. But I don't have 5000 gold right now."

"If you don't have the money then there will be no negotiations."

"W-wait a minute! I can save up the money. But I need some time. Five days. 5000 gold isn't a small amount of money. I'll have to exit Dark Earth and gather that much money."

".....You want me to wait five days for you?"

"Is it impossible? Then how about 50 gold? I can give you that amount right now."

"W-what? This guy..... You're the Truthseeker yet you're trying to bargain for the Moon Piece? In addition, only 50 gold? That's 1/100 of what I asked!"

"Then what should I do? I have no money right now."

"This guy....."

Albert muttered before his nose suddenly twitched and he flinched. Then he suddenly turned around while a choked scream could be heard in the darkness.

"Hik!"

It was Racard who had been creeping closer. Albert frowned and stared at Ark.

"This fool, you really are stupid!"

'Damn, I forgot that he is a wolf.'

He hadn't taken into account a wolf's sense of smell. Ark waved his hands and quickly gave excuses.

"No, I didn't know what that guy was planning to do!"

"What nonsense, these negotiations are now failed!"

"Sheesh, stop him. Racard. Do whatever it takes to get the Moon Piece!"

"U-understood!"

Racard shot forward like an arrow at Ark's words. Ark also used Sprint to dash towards Albert. However, Racard was still 50 metres away from Albert. Ark was several hundred metres away. There was no way that Ark or Racard could stop Albert from swallowing the stone in time.

'Damn..... Is this really the end of the Moon Piece?'

Ark moaned desperately as he saw the Moon Piece about to enter Albert's mouth. Daeng kang! It was at that time. There was a sudden sound and Albert stumbled. At the same time, the Moon Piece fell from his hands. Ark couldn't fathom what had happened....but there was no time to worry about it. The shaky Albert was reaching towards the Moon Piece with his hands.

"Dark blade!"

Just before it landed in his hands, Ark used Dark Blade on the Moon Piece.

"Racard, now!"

"I know. I'll catch it!"

Racard snatched the Moon Piece from the sky. After Racard snatched the Moon Piece, the Wolrang just gaped as they couldn't understand the situation. Then dozens of the Wolrang ran up and caught Albert who was trying to escape.

"Ugh, this, unbelievable!"

In just a few seconds, the Moon Piece's kidnapping incident was solved.

-A mysterious stone fragment filled with ancient power.

It is a mysterious stone with a dark aura on its surface. 50 points in Knowledge of Ancient Relics is required to confirm this.

Before checking this item, a -50% penalty to all stats will be applied to the owner.

Ark finally obtained the Moon Piece after Racard passed it to him. And Albert was pinned to the floor by the Wolrang.

"Phew, fortunately it didn't turn out badly. But who attacked Albert?"

"I..... It was me....."

Then something popped up from Albert's back.

“Eh? You are.....?”

Ark’s eyes widened as he muttered. The person holding the shovel and approached was the slave monster Flip. Ark had forgotten but there were dozens of slaves caught in the underground jail. The Shackles of Pain was released so they knew that Karakul was dead. But they couldn’t grasp how the situation had changed so they hid in the dungeon before overhearing Ark’s conversation with Albert.

“I explain the general situation. Although the shackles were unlocked..... We were still slaves.... That did not change. And the person who will decide our treatment..... Your summon, no..... It’ll be you. So I thought I should help you.”

“But how did you approach without Albert noticing you?”

“Huhuhu, I.... Towards guys with a lot of fur..... I will never be caught.....”

Ark immediately understood the meaning of Flip’s words. Once again, Flip was a flea type monster. Albert and the Wolrang were wolves. Of course he would be insensitive to the smell of fleas in his fur.

“Thank you very much.”

“No, thank you....”

Flip muttered before looking slightly fearful as Racard approached. It had lived for decades as a slave to Karakul but now Ark’s summon Racard was the new Lord. The slaves hesitantly exited the jails before there was a sudden shout of anger.

“You bastardddddd!”

Ark, the Wolrang and Flip turned their heads at the same time. One monster was running at a face pace towards Ark. It had sunken eyes and a blackened and gloomy face, with the entire body wrapped in rags! It was a dreadful monster that looked like it had starved for hundreds of years.

‘What’s with this guy? Was there such a monster among the slaves?’

The Wolrang and Bloody thought the situation was finished and had become careless. The thing ran up to Ark and swung a pickaxe. No, it tried to swing it. Ark automatically withdrew his sword.

Duk, kwatang, degul degul.

The monster had stepped on one of its ragged hems and fell down. Ark forgot about counter attacking and stared at the monster blankly.

‘What the hell? Did this guy suddenly appear just to do a body gag?’

“Ugh, ugh....”

The monster who had fallen to the ground suddenly moved its shoulders and sobbed.

“Eh? Crying? Hey, Flip. Who is he?”

“That.....

Flip scratched its head and was about to talk. However, the monster had winced at Ark’s words. Then it raised its head and tried to swing the pickaxe again.

“What? What did you say? What type of man are you?”

Pakak! Ark kicked the monster’s jaw when it sprang at him, making it collapse again. But that only lasted for a brief moment. The monster raised its body like a zombie and shrieked before running up to him.

“Huk, you hit me? You dared hit me? Okay, then I’ll kill you!”

“What is with this guy? Huh? Wait, this voice is.....?”

Ark felt something strange and looked at the monster with Eyes of the Cat. Ark screamed after seeing the information window floating on top of the monster’s head.

“Eek? B-Buksil?”

To his surprise, the identity of the monster was Buksil. Buksil’s face contorted at Ark’s scream.

“Ugh, you really didn’t recognize me?”

“No, what on earth is with that shabby form?”

“..... How dare you ask that question!”

Buksil ground his teeth together and yelled.

“Why am I like this! Digging all day and sleep deprivation! In addition, during the evenings I had to provide the blood of two people by himself. Because you deserted me and left!”

Karakul had been deeply offended when Ark escaped. But Ark had already left his sphere of influence so he turned all his fury towards Buksil. The crime of attempting to escape with Ark, of hitting him with the pig missile etc. made Buksil's prison life extremely different and more difficult than before. Although Ark had kind of expected it when he left Buksil behind.

'But I never thought he would change like this.....'

It had only been 3 days since Ark escaped. However, it looked like those 3 day were a lot more difficult than the 8 previous days. Once again, the decisive moment for such a hellish experience was when Ark used Buksil as a pig missile. But there was no reason to talk about it now. He felt a bit sorry when thinking about it, but it had already happened. And hadn't he managed to save Buksil and defeat Karakul because he was successful in escaping?

"Ah, um.... That is..... Anyway, I'm sorry."

"What, what, what? You think everything will be cleared up with an apology?"

"This brat, why are you questioning it so closely? Anyway, it's already been settled so why don't we forget it?"

Ark grinned awkwardly towards Buksil. Then something unimaginable happened. All of a sudden, one of Buksil's eyeballs popped out? Buksil hurriedly fumbled with along the ground and picked up the eyeball before putting it back in.

"Hik, my eyes..... My eyes....."

"Eh? What the? What happened to your eyes?"

"Do you need to ask? This is your fault!"

"What are you talking about? How can you blame me for your eyes popping out?"

"I don't know, I don't know. Everything is your fault!"

"Corrosion.....that's what it is called....."

Flip scratched its head and interrupted.

Here was a summary of the absurd situation. After Ark had escaped, Karakul drank portions for two people from Buksil. But even if Buksil had the nutrition of a pig, it was impossible for him to recover enough blood every day. Therefore all the blood in Buksil's body became depleted in a matter of days. However, Karakul was still angry and sucked the last drop of blood from Buksil. And at this point, something

happened to Buksil that even Karakul didn't expect. Buksil's boy which had been completely depleted of blood acted like a vacuum and sucked in some of Karakul's blood. If Karakul had strong magic like the highest ranking nobles who lived in the Immortal castle, Buksil would be turned into a vampire. However, Karakul's blood only had enough magic to turn him into a monster.

"But a foreigner..... Cannot change into a Bloody. Karakul knew that sometimes the blood would flow backwards..... So he hadn't paid that much attention....."

Karakul never expected that the unexpected skill he used on Buksil would react with the blood transfusion. Karakul's skill was normally used on vampire babies. In the old days, the skill Karakul used to watch things using his eyeballs was normally used to watch the children. However, he had used this skill on Buksil so it turned him into a strange creature.

'Anyway, that guy is really unlucky. But he still received a plausible skill. Couldn't he use that remove eyeballs skill to get himself out of trouble?'

Ark laughed with an amazed expression. Then Buksil who had been rubbing his eyes angrily grabbed Ark.

"Laugh? Were you laughing just now?"

"So what?"

Ark raised his chin and spoke in an impudent voice.

"It couldn't be helped at that time. No? Even if it meant I would be captured again? If I hadn't done it then wouldn't you and I still be digging in the dungeon? But Karakul was defeating thanks to me escaping. You got to be freed as well. So why are you complaining? On the contrary, shouldn't you thank me?"

"T-talking like that....."

Buksil licked his lips and stuttered. Well, Ark felt sorry when looking at that shabby form. But it was just like he said. Even though he was sorry, Buksil didn't seem to be accepting it. If that's the case..... Ark leaned down and grabbed Buksil's collar.

"Are you still mad? Shouldn't you be thankful that I came to help you? Are you still a person? Huh?"

Ah, the villain had resorted to threats. Buksil's face turned red. He opened his mouth and was going to speak. Then Ark smiled and spoke in a low voice.

"Well, I do understand your feelings. I'm not that heartless. But is it really smart to attack me?"

"What the? I won't be affected by your threats anymore. I've already gone to the depths of hell!"

"Then would you like to enter the bottom of hell again?"

"What?"

Buksil flinched and looked at Ark. Ark smiled and spoke in a quiet tone.

"Think about it. Weren't you caught by Karakul and trapped in the underground dungeon? However, Karakul has died and my pet is the new Lord. In other words, it is possible to lock someone up in the underground jail again. Do you understand?"

".....!"

Buksil started sweating as his hands gripped the pickaxe tightly.

"Eh? Why are you shaking? Relax. That was just a scenario I mentioned."

Ark wiped Buksil's sweat and continued in a soft voice.

"Well, is the problem settled? The problem was that I left you while escaping but wouldn't you prefer to thank me for rescuing you?"

There was the hidden threat of being locked in the jail again! Buksil's face was dyed with fear. Buksil knew. Ark was a person who wouldn't blink while doing such dreadful actions. Although Buksil accepted it, he still dragged his feet. Finally, he had no choice but to tearfully succumb to Ark's threat. However, Buksil wasn't able to leave it like that.

".....I understand. Instead there is one condition."

"Condition?"

"I need a subordinate."

"Eh? What?"

"I actually wanted to tell you before. Do you know how much work is needed? Foraging ingredients, filming the video and even running Ark-nim's errands. Even your summons are ignoring me these days. I used to have my brothers but now..... A subordinate is needed to improve my motivation and work load."

‘Damn, is this my fault?’

Ark scratched his head with an astounded expression. In fact, previously he would’ve just ignored it. However, it was now necessary for Buksil to accompany Ark. And Buksil was a user not a NPC. There was a limit to how much he could be pulled along using intimidation. He also felt sorry about abandoning him before so Ark wanted to help. But a subordinate..... In other words, he wanted one of Ark’s summons as a subordinate? Of course, it wasn’t that difficult. But Racard had picked on Buksil so far and he would not listen obediently to anyone besides Ark. The same was also true for Radun and Razak.

‘Racard had just become an Earl so it’ll be troublesome if I tell him to serve Buksil. Besides, isn’t the point of a subordinate to relieve Buksil’s stress? No matter how much I tell them to treat Buksil like a hyung, neither Racard or Razak would listen obediently to Buksil. But it’s not possible to completely reject it.....’

If Buksil refused to film the videos then Ark would have a serious problem. He was obedient now under the threat of being trapped in the dungeon again but he didn’t know how Buksil would react after they left Dark Earth.

‘The best way is to buy a pet.....’

In New World, pets other than summons existed. However, a pet like a squirrel cost several hundred gold. In addition, Buksil didn’t want a simple pet but a subordinate he could control.

‘Wait, a subordinate?’

Then Ark suddenly had a brilliant idea.

“Okay. You wanted a subordinate to relieve your work load?”

Ark smiled and went to where the Wolrang were gathered.

“Let’s show him the price of betrayal and rip him apart!”

“Yes, we can never forgive his humiliation!”

The Wolrang were gathered around Albert and talking violently. Ark stealthily intruded between the Wolrang and spoke to the elder.

“Elder-nim. Could you possibly entrust this guy to me?”

“Entrust him to you? Surely you don’t intend to help him?”

"It's because of Albert that I was caught as a slave for Karakul. My mind also wants to kill him immediately. However, Albert is still a descendant of the Wolrang who fought with Hero Maban against the dark forces. Killing Albert will now wash away the disgrace he dealt against your honour. In addition, killing him is too generous a punishment for a traitor."

"Umm, I guess so....."

The elder sighed and nodded.

"In that case, how about I take Albert with me? The Wolrang was a clan that followed Hero Maban. If I take Albert then there will be no stain to the Wolrang's honour. While following me around as punishment, Albert might even think about the honour of the Wolrang clan again."

That's right. Although he was making up plausible reasons, the real reason Ark wanted Albert was as a subordinate for Buksil. But the elder had a dissatisfied expression.

"I understand your intention. If he accompanies the descendant of Hero Maban then he might be rehabilitated. But that child's sin is so immense. Will serving you be a suitable punishment? Moreover, he might not listen to you....."

"You don't have to worry about that and I'll prove it to you."

Ark approached Albert who was gasping on the floor.

"Hey, Albert! Did you hear me words? What do you think about it?"

"Ugh! I will never serve you. Although I am like this, I am still a Wolrang. I would rather die....."

"I knew you would say that. Radun, Shackles of Pain."

Ark received the Shackles of Pain from Radun. It was the shackles used on Ark when he had previously been captured. After escaping Karakul's territory, it had fallen off but Ark had packed it just in case it was needed. Ark whistled and locked Albert into the shackles.

"You know how this words right?"

"T-this is.... You bastard.... Doing this kind of thing....."

"That's the wrong answer."

“W-wait. Kkaekkaeng!”

Then Ark started stepping on Albert. Karakul was died but the Shackles of Pain was an item. The effect applied to the item would be unchanged. And the effects of Shackles of Pain amplified the pain by 10 times! Ark had trained in taekwondo for a long time and he knew how to inflict pain. Ark utilized that knowledge to only hit a vital spot. Under the Shackles of Pain, that suffering was amplified by 10 times. The Wolrang became startled at Albert’s loud scream.

“You, you bastard! Kuaak! How are you a human....? You must be disguised as one.....”

“I don’t want to hear that from a wolf.”

“S-stop! H-help me. Ah, no..... I would rather die.....”

“You don’t like it?”

“Aaaaah! Kkaekkaeng!”

Ark laughed and continued stepping on Albert. Such cruel violence! The slave monsters, Wolrang and even the Bloody turned pale with fear. How much time had passed? Every time Ark would use his hands or feet, Albert would roll on the ground until he eventually grabbed Ark’s hem.

“I’ll do it! Whatever it takes. No, please let me do it. Just please don’t hit me!” Ark then smiled and went to the elder.

“Hmm, you heard his words. What does Elder-nim think?”

“.....Maybe accompanying you will be a more serious punishment than dying.”

The elder swallowed his saliva and nodded. The other Wolrang also agreed. It was to the extent that they looked at Albert with pity.

“Buksil? What do you think about this guy as a subordinate?”

“Huh? Huh? Yes!”

When Ark suddenly spoke to him, Buksil nodded his head with surprise. Then the elder who had been watching sighed.

“Albert, do you really believe that you will reflect on your bad deeds with him as your Master?”

“Yes....”

“Good. Although you are a traitor, you are still a part of the Wolrang clan. I don’t need to explain that the Wolrang’s purpose is to serve. You have to be really prepared and swear obedience according to the custom of the Wolrang.”

Albert flinched at the elder’s words but listened with his head raised. Then he stared at Ark before approaching Buksil. After hesitating for a moment, he fell down next to the group and exposed his stomach. That’s right. Revealing the stomach was a sign of obedience in animals.

“Now, please stroke his stomach. An oath of obedience will be formed.”

Buksil rubbed the stomach with trembling hands and Albert instantly panted with his tongue hanging out. The elder and the Wolrang wore serious expressions like they were conducting a sacred rite. Thus, Albert became Buksil’s pet dog. Since the problem regarding Albert was settled, Ark went to Racard.

“Racard, our talk earlier..... You said that you wanted to keep the decorations if you snatched the Moon Piece from Albert.....”

“Did I say that? Hahaha. I don’t remember that? Even if I did say that, it’s not like I got the Moon Piece back for you.”

“As expected, you also thought like that? So I can take the decorations as promised?”

“Of course. Take it. I have no interest in such things in the first place.”

Racard laughed awkwardly with a frozen face. The effects of violence wasn’t only applied to Buksil. Racard had become cocky after evolving into an Earl but seeing Albert being beaten up reminded him of his own experiences. Thus he didn’t have to use violence on Buksil or Racard.

“Then it is a happy ending.”

Ark laughed and murmured brightly. No one else laughed along with him.

## **Act 2: Change Professsion Quest**

**[Important Translator’s Note:**

So I've finally received confirmation in this chapter that Jewel was a male all along. Therefore I will keep his name as Jewel but will be referring to him as male starting from this chapter. Previous chapters will be edited to reflect this. Sorry for the misunderstanding.

Another change I've made is <King> set to <Animal King> set.]

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"Hey, Baekgu."

"B-Baekgu? Who is that?"

Albert who was lying on the ground looked up and asked. Ark replied with a shrewd expression.

"That is your name from now on."

"B-but I am called Albert....."

"Ohh, you don't like the name I gave you?"

Albert flinched and retreated as Ark's face tightened. He was still trying to keep his rebellious spirit? It didn't seem like it at the moment.....with his ears and tail drooping while the body was trembling. Albert entreated in a quivering voice.

"Yes, I understand." Call me Baekgu or whatever you want. I'll come whenever you call....."

'Hmm, seems like my discipline was effective.'

Ark nodded with a pleased face. In fact, there was a reason he had beaten up Albert so intensely. In order to raise a pet dog, the relationship between Master and servant had to be made clear from the beginning. If he went easy on a wild animal in the beginning then it would become more difficult to tame later on. Albert was a member of the wolf species. Ark had no guarantee that he wouldn't become rebellious later on. That was also the reason why he changed Albert's name into one commonly used for dogs. Now Albert would remember today's pain every time he was called Baekgu.

"Okay Baekgu. I don't need to say it again, but from today onwards you will be Buksil's pet dog. Do you understand? You're rank in the group is at the very bottom. Naturally Buksil and my summons are your superiors. Understood?"

"Buksil....."

Albert, no Baekgu growled Buksil's name in a low voice. Although he had submitted to Ark, Baekgu was still a member of the wolf species. It would be fine if he was serving Ark who was the descendant of Hero Maban, but being the subordinate of a pig injured his pride.

"What's with that look? Do you have a complaint?"

"Ah, no it's fine!"

However, he immediately became a pet dog again as soon as Ark frowned. Ark stroked Baekgu's head a little bit before looking at Buksil.

"Okay, okay. That's a good dog. Hey Buksil. Do you have a problem with your subordinate? You'll take care of Baekgu from now on."

"Huh? M-me?"

"Of course. You're the one who wanted some help."

Although Baekgu was a servant, it would still cost money to feed him. The reason Ark wanted Buksil to raise Baekgu was so that all the expenses would go to Buksil. Buksil felt like crying after having the food expenses of Baekgu shoved on him, but he didn't dare complain after seeing Ark's previous violence.

'Damn, as expected I couldn't oppose Ark-nim.'

In the end Buksil was just left with regrets. In order to change the atmosphere, Ark clapped his hands.

"Now, let's start working earnestly!"

"Huh? Working? What do you have left to do?"

"Well, there is one more important thing."

Ark nodded with a serious face.

'Huhuhu, now comes the happy epilogue after the happy ending.'

Yes, the really important information in fairy tales wasn't the body. The part that always wowed the readers was what came after the happy ending. Did the nice and hardworking protagonist become rich?

'However, the world isn't as insignificant as portrayed in the stories. In reality, the hero would die after suffering miserably.'

It wasn't possible to end a story with this as it would crush a child's hopes and dreams. In the end, the only thing that gave hopes and dreams to children was a capitalist ideology! That was what Ark believed. Therefore he sought as much compensation as possible without any hesitation.

"Baekgu, have you lived in this castle for a long time? Show me every corner of this castle."

Of course, his intention wasn't to look around a vampire's castle. It was in order to recoup so of the expenses he wasted on making Racard evolve.

"This is a guest room."

"Wait a minute. Ohh, there are quite a few decorations here?"

Ark made Baekgu go around and place a red tag on many items. Then Buksil would pack anything with the red tag into his bags. In fact, Ark had a good eye after working part time in an antique store. It helped him grasp which items were worth money. If Ark was alone then he would carefully choose the items worth the most money. But now there was Buksil. Buksil had emptied all his bags before leaving Seutandal. Furthermore, as an NPC Baekgu also had a small backpack.

'I don't need to worry about bag space.'

So Ark attached the red tags to items that were even worth 1 copper. Therefore Ark even took the forks, plates and knives.

'This is a lot more than I thought it would be.'

Ark was especially impressed with the warehouse. In Dark Earth, it was difficult to find items other than decor. He only knew this later, but the Bloody didn't use weapons or armours. The Bloody was a monster that used their claws or thick leather as equipment. Therefore a Bloody would also drop claws or leather when they died. However, there was a considerable number of Moon rocks and general items in the warehouse.

"Karakul used to collect some of these items from the coast."

That was the Bloody's explanation.

'Huhuhu, Karakul is making me happy even after he died.'

Naturally Ark packed all the items stored in the warehouse.

‘Sheesh, there are no magic items. But I should get 600~700 gold if I dispose of all these items. That barely covers the cost of one summoning port but the income was better than I expected.’

“Ohhhh, my castle.....my castle.....”

Racard whimpered with tears in his eyes. Who would come to the house of their summons and then deprive it of all the household furniture? The Wolrang watched Racard with pity and muttered.

“This is the descendant of Hero Maban that Elder-nim has been waiting for?”

“Isn’t he different from what we heard?”

“Well.....I haven’t met Hero Maban either.....”

The elder scratched his head with an embarrassed expression. Ark heard their voices but he wasn’t embarrassed at all. He didn’t know what illusions the Wolrang possessed about Hero Maban but didn’t a legendary hero also need to eat? In order to kill the devil, travel expenses were necessary. And this was a game which reflected reality. When a hero enters a house and breaks the jars to look for treasure, why wouldn’t a NPC become angry? There was only one reason why they would tolerate it!

“Huhuhu, it’s okay because I am a hero.”

Yes, heroes with the occupation of a legendary hero would get a free pass. In addition, Ark had a urgent reason that matched a hero.

‘Even the descendant of a hero has to save for the rental cost!’

Of course, he had money from selling the items from Magaro’s Laboratory and his booming stores so he wasn’t worried about the rental cost. But his assets would reset back to ‘0’ once the house was paid off.

‘I have to continue saving even 1 copper.’

Wasn’t Ark the descendant of one of the most legendary heroes in the game? Yet he still couldn’t forget about the quest compensation. Therefore Ark finished going through the vampire castle and found the Wolrang elder.

“Elder-nim, soon you’ll be away from the rule of the vampires and can recover your lost glory.”

“Ah, it is all thanks to you. On behalf of the clan, thank you.”

“Yes, the Wolrang family can now regain their former glory.”

Ark smiled while muttering the same thing.

‘Why is he repeating it?’

Then the elder coughed like he remembered something and spoke.

“Cough, I remember that I still need to give you a reward. But as you know, we’ve lived under Karakul’s rule for 100 years so we don’t have that much. So will this item be okay?”

The elder reached into his backpack and pulled out shoes made from silver leather.

Wolf’s Feet (Rare)

Armour type: Leather Shoes

Defense: 60

Durability: 60/60

Weight: 15

User restriction: Level 200

These boots belong to the legendary wolf warriors who fought with Hero Maban hundreds of years ago. When these boots are used, it is possible to dash just like a wolf.

<Option: Immunity to fear, Movement speed +40%, Attack speed +10%>

<Special Option: The ‘Jump’ skill is available. You can jump up to 10 metres when using this skill. Cool down time: 5 minutes. Mana consumption: 50>

-The quest <Wolrang’s Revenge’ has been completed.

‘Ohh, it’s a rare item!’

Ark’s mouth opened absentmindedly. As expected when the quest difficulty was B+, he received a rare item.

‘Although why is it footwear of all things?’

It wasn't that he didn't like it. Currently Ark was wearing the 'Wind Spirit's Boots.' When considering the level restriction, Wolf's Feet had better defense and options. However, the additional effects weren't that much larger than what he was currently wearing. Besides, the Wind Spirit's Boots had the Slide skill attached so he could utilize it better.

'The Wolf's Feet has the skill Jump? I can jump up to 10 metres? It isn't something that I can utilize in battle. The cool down time is also 5 minutes. Well, it's not possible for me to use the Wind Spirit's Boots forever but I don't know if I should change it yet. I'll decide once I try it out in battle.'

Therefore Ark switched footwear for the moment. Suddenly there was a dinging sound and the information window appeared.

-The set items' effect has been applied.

You have equipped a new item in the set. It is a special set of items that craftsmen created for an ancient hero. Naturally, the effects will become more powerful when the number of equipped set items increases. If you obtain all the items in a set then the effects will be beyond compare.

\* Currently equipped set items:<Animal King>

『Raccoon's Pith』 『Cat Paws』 『Guardian Armour of the Merpeople』 『Wolf's Feet』 『??』

You have equipped four items in the <Animal King> set and an additional effect will be applied.

<Wild Ability: Strength +10 (+10), Agility +10 (+10), Stamina +10 (+10), Defense +10 (+10)>

'Set item! If this happens then there is no choice.'

Although 'Cat Paws' was a rare item and Raccoon's Pith had the transformation ability, its defense was a lot lower compared to armour around level 200~300. There was also the effect which ignored the underwater penalty but he hadn't been near water for a while. So there was a lot of times when he wanted to buy new leather armour from the auction site. The reason he hadn't changed the armour was because they were set items. He thought the set item bonus was too valuable to change.

'However, as my level increased then the defense from changing armour was higher than the set bonus so I was quite worried.....'

He never thought he would find a set item in a place like this. Thanks to that his strength, agility, stamina and defense had increased from 10 to 20 so there was no need to worry about changing armours for the moment.

‘Yes, this is the additional effect with only four items.....’

If he completed the set then he would probably receive a huge effect. However, finding the set item was more difficult than he thought. Every day thousands of people connected to the information site looking for information about set items. Although they found one or two directly, the remaining items were bought at auction. Therefore Ark had half given up.

‘Wait, haven’t I received all the set items from the beast species?’

In addition, the name of the set was Animal King! Then wouldn’t the remaining set item be related to a beast clan?

‘Hassan from the Meow said that there were quite a few beast species apart from the mermaids and racoons. I’ll have to ask Yggdrasil if he knows the location of any other beast clans. Anyway, now I’ve found four items. There is a high likelihood that I’ll complete it!’

“Thank you. I will use it well.”

“I’m glad that you like it.”

The elder had been worried that Ark wouldn’t like the item. However, those feelings disappeared at the sight of the child like Ark. Ark fidgeted with the boots before he suddenly asked.

“What will the Wolrang do now?”

“I haven’t thought about it yet.”

“Will you leave the Dark Earth?”

“Of course. After a long time.....no, for some of the clan this is the first time they’ve transformed into their original form. This is the true form of the Wolrang. The Moon Piece also belongs to the descendant of Hero Maban. If we remain in Dark Earth then we’ll be forced into that miserable human form again.

The elder shook his head violently at the thought of living like they had previously.

"Luckily, the Dark Earth is no longer an isolated place so we can go to the outside world. Of course it won't be that easy. There are many among the Wolrang who have not experience the outside world."

"Then shall I introduce you to a suitable village?"

Ark asked with eager eyes.

"A suitable village?"

"Yes, there is a village that I know very well on the continent. It is originally a human village but now the raccoons and Meow live there as well. If the Wolrang don't know the continent then it will be a good place to live."

Of course, the village Ark was talking about was Lancel. Not long ago, the Baran evacuated from Seutandal had sought refuge in Lancel and the <Find the Settlers> quest had been completed. Unfortunately, some of the immigrants left and the achievement was stopped at 98%. If the Wolrang moved there than his quest would finally be completed. However, the elder shook his head after thinking for a moment.

"No, it is a good suggestion but I'll have to decline."

"Huh? How come?"

Ark became confused as he thought they would accept.

"The Wolrang is a beast clan descended from wolves. After being trapped here by Karakul for 100 years, we realized the type of life we desire. To dash freely in an unknown world is in our instincts. We want to run around the continent that our ancestors protected and revitalize those wild instincts."

"That would be a problem!"

"Huh? What do you mean? Are you in trouble?"

"Ah, no, I mean...."

Ark scratched his head with an irritated expression before sighing.

'Damn, what is this? If I can make the Wolrang migrate then wouldn't be long quest end? No, I have to do whatever it takes to make them move. A quest is a quest, but I received a huge benefit when I made the Meow and raccoons move to the village.'

If the number of beast species in Lancel village rose then Ark's influence would also increase. But was that all? Once they moved to the village, he could use them or the Meow as troops. Wasn't the Wolrang's combat power a lot stronger than the Meow?

'I need to convince them somehow..... But the Wolrang are wolves. Furthermore, they don't desire anything except....wait.....honour?'

Ark thought for a while and came up with a plausible excuse. Ark summarized his idea in a firm voice.

"There is a reason for the Wolrang to go to the village. Although I haven't said anything because I didn't want to worry the Wolrang, the continent is not as peaceful as it used to be."

"It's not peaceful?"

"Yes, this is information I learned while followed Hero Maban's footprints. Several hundred years ago, the Dark Lord was defeated thanks to the 7 heroes. Unfortunately, he hadn't completely disappeared. The Dark Lord is still hiding somewhere and there are several wicked villains trying to resurrect the Dark Lord through evil schemes."

"W-what? The Dark Lord?"

"That's correct. It is the reason why I've been frantically looking for Hero Maban's legacy. As a descendant of Hero Maban, my fate is to stop those trying to resurrect the Dark Lord. But it is impossible with the power of one person. This is still a secret.....I've gathered several beast clans in Lancel village in case of a crisis. Won't the warrior beast clan help the descendant of Hero Maban?"

"Ohhh, you really are Hero Maban's descendant!"

The elder spoke in a voice filled with admiration at Ark's words.

"Honestly, I thought you weren't really reliable after seeing your actions after Karakul died but you truly are Hero Maban's descendant. Yes, so you did have a deep meaning. If you weren't resolute then it would be impossible to defeat evil. A true hero wouldn't worry about what other people think."

"Yes. I'll put up with the reputation of a stingy person in order to make preparations to save the world.....ugh!"

Ark wiped at his tears with an angry expression. Although Buksil and Racard looked like they were going to throw up, the elder started patting Ark's shoulder with sympathy.

"It's okay, it's okay. You don't have to say anything. The road of a hero is very lonely."

"You understand?"

"I know, I know. We fought in the frontlines against the darkness yet we ended up being captured by a vampire. Why wouldn't we recognize your noble intentions?"

"Thank you. Then moving to the village....."

"Well, the Wolrang can't really refuse if that is your intention. But after living peacefully in a village, will we truly be able to help like our ancestors? Honestly, our strength right now might be more of a hindrance than a help."

"T-that.....!"

'Why are you thinking about so many things?'

Angry welled up inside Ark at the elder's response.

'But the elder isn't wrong.....it would be better for the Wolrang to become stronger. But my settlers quest.....wait.....settlers..... Don't I just have to increase the number of residents registered to Lancel village? Then perhaps.....?'

Ark thought for a moment before immediately talking.

"Elder-nim is correct. But won't it be a problem if I can't contact the Wolrang after they find their wild instincts? So how about we do this?"

"What is it?"

"I'll take the Wolrang back to Lancel village for the moment. After you become a resident of Lancel village, you can travel the continent. If you do this, wouldn't it be easier for me to find you if there is a situation?"

It was like a false address registration!

"That's right. There is such that method. Indeed, we were born in the Dark Earth so we haven't seen any other beast clans. We also know nothing about the continent. Okay, we'll do as you say. We'll become residents of Lancel village when we head to the continent."

In the end, Ark received the elder's permission. At the same time, an information window appeared in front of Ark.

- 'Find New Settlers' quest has been updated.

You have received the promise of the Wolrang clan who live in the Dark Earth to become residents of Lancel village. The quest will be completed when the Wolrang arrives in Lancel village.

<New Settlers Found: 98% (+15%) complete>

- It is possible to receive the compensation promised from Lancel village when the achievement exceeds 100%.

'I did it! Now it is like the quest has already finished!'

"Then we will go back. We need to be prepared to leave for the continent."

The elder led the Wolrang and returned to the village near the coast. Meanwhile Racard started to organize the place. The first thing Racard did was gather all the Bloody scattered in the castle and was inaugurated as the Lord. Although there were only 300~400 Bloody in the castle, others were dispatched to prevent the intrusion of other vampires so he actually had 800 Bloody.

'With this many Bloody, there should be no need to worry about other vampire's invading.

In fact, that was the main thing Ark was worried about. Racard had defeated Karakul who monopolized this area of the Dark Earth. In reality, Racard didn't have the ability to defeat other vampires.

If that fact was revealed then the other vampires wouldn't leave Racard alone. After Ark left, if other vampires asked for a duel then Racard would be beaten to death. The only lucky thing was the rule set by the Lord. Before applying for a duel, the other vampire had to defeat all the Bloody and make his way up to the castle. However, Karakul had 800 Bloody! That was a lot more than the surrounding vampires had. In addition, Racard also had dozens of slave monsters. In fact, the most unexpected thing was the reaction of the slave monsters.

"We.....will continue to work at the underground area.....if possible...."

When the inauguration ended, Flip spoke as the representative of the slaves.

Ark had learnt this while he was a slave, but the slaves had been there for at least 10 years while some of them had been trapped for 20~3- years. After more than 10 years

in prison, they were more afraid of the outside world than the jail. This applied to all the monsters. Anyway, this place was Dark Earth. If they went outside then it was likely that another vampire would capture them in order to suck their blood. Of course, Racard was a vampire so he also had a thirst for blood. But as Ark's pet, most of his meals were taken outside. Therefore they thought that Racard was better than other vampires. Now that the Moon Piece was gone, no more Moon rocks would appear. But small miscellaneous items and jewel still appeared in the ground so there was no reason to stop the monsters.

'Huhuhu, I might come back to the Dark Earth later. Then I'll take all of the items that the monsters had gathered.'

"Okay, it's fine if you truly want to work in this environment."

"We will work harder from now on!"

"Ah.....Master, always doing as you please....."

Racard complained while rolling his eyeballs but he settled down after one stare.

Now there was only one minor thing left to do.

Ark moved the registration place of the summoning port while Racard sent for the three baby bat siblings who had been waiting at the old place.

"Wow, wow! This is now our Lord's place?"

"Huhuhu, Karakul was nothing compared to our Lord."

"But Karakul seemed to have a surprisingly frugal nature. The castle is so big and wonderful but it has no decor."

"Yes, he was like that....."

Racard scowled at Ark before replying. However, it was impossible for the baby bats to understand the circumstances behind Racard's voice.

"Hmm hmm, our Lord doesn't have to worry anymore."

"Yes, we'll defend the castle even if our Lord is summoned outside."

"Newbie, watch over our Lord well. You should serve him better in the future!"

"Lord, please take care!"

However, Ark was already ignoring the nonsense from the baby bats. Ark had finally taken out the Moon Piece.

‘Okay, shall I begin now that everything is settled?’

How long did it take him to find the Three Marvels? It had been 1 year since he received the Star Fragment in the underwater city! He had finally found the last piece of the Three Marvels. Extravagant bonuses and skills are always given whenever he found a new fragment. However, the Moon Piece was different. He would receive extra abilities but it was also an item closely related to the Dark Walker’s second class change.

‘No, it is obvious. The Three Marvels is an item for the 2nd class change!’

That was the reason why Ark had waited before pulling out the Moon Piece. He didn’t want to treat something so important as a chore. Ark took a deep breath and grabbed the Moon Piece firmly. There was a small vibration and the information window appeared.

-Your Knowledge of Ancient Relics has confirmed ‘The fragment of stone filled with an ancient power.’

-Fragment of stone filled with ancient power (Moon Piece)

A stone filled with mysterious and frightening powers. This was made using darkness but it has taken on the attribute of light. Using Knowledge of Ancient Relics, you have confirmed that it is one of the Three Marvels that Hero Maban used in the Dark Century. Hero Maban has left his power inside the Three Marvels for his descendant. Only the Truthseeker can obtain the knowledge that Hero Maban left behind.

\*The owner of the Moon Piece can use Hero Maban’s techniques.

<Experience +30,000, Knowledge of Ancient Relics +15, Intelligence +10, Fame increased by 20>

-New Profession-specific skill.

Gift of Darkness III (Passive): A Dark Walker’s abilities will increase significantly in the dark. Stats will be increased by 50%. The duration of ‘Stealth’ will increase to 30 minutes. However, this skill cannot be raised.

-New Profession-specific skill.

Moonlight Shadow (Beginner, Active): By releasing the power of Hero Maban and

the moon, you can create 3 shadows with 30% of your maximum health and defense.

Your alter ego will be unable to move, but it will release a hostile energy to lure the surrounding monsters. When surrounded by monsters, this skill can be used to escape the crisis. However, this Dark Walker skill requires the power of the moon so it is needed to charge in the moonlight first.

<Mana consumption: 500>

“Oh, Gift of Darkness III!”

Ark was in such a good mood he felt like screaming. As expected, the Moon Piece gave a tremendous bonus. The one Ark hoped for the most was Gift of Darkness III. So far it had increased every time he found a fragment so he had been hoping for an upgrade this time. As expected, the Three Marvels didn't disappoint him. Now his dark attribute bonus was 50% to all stats! If he was a level 300 Dark Walker then he would gain 150 levels if he fought in the darkness! It wasn't an exaggeration to say that Ark clung to the Three Marvels because of the Gift of Darkness. But that wasn't all. The Star Piece gave him Blade Storm, he learnt Dark Dance from the Dark Piece and now it was possible to learn Moonlight Shadow from the Moon Piece.

‘The skill isn't that bad.’

Ark nodded with a satisfied expression after reading the information window. Moonlight Shadow was a skill which created a dummy. Ark had no area of effect attacks so he had only been able to fight a lot of monsters because of his pets. However, it became quite difficult when the numbers exceeded 10. If he faced them one on one then it was easy to take care of 20~30 monsters but it was harder when he was surrounded.

“Then wouldn't I be able to escape when the monsters' attention is attracted to the dummy? Well, it only has 30% of my health so it would be smashed in an instant after being surrounded by enemies. But it should become useful when combined with Dark Dance.”

He was quite satisfied with the abilities received from the Moon Piece. There was just one problem.

“What the? Is that it?”

Ark muttered while staring blankly at the Moon Piece. Three Marvels.....the characters literally spelt out Three Marvellous Treasures. Therefore wasn't it impossible for there to be four or five fragments? Then why hadn't information about the profession change appeared yet?

“What is going on? Don’t tell me that the Three Marvels is unrelated to a class change and this is the end?”

And, of course, the idea that the Three Marvels was related to the second class change was only Ark’s guess. In fact none of the Meow, mermaids or raccoons had spoken one word about a class change. They only said that Hero Maban’s power was hidden in the Three Marvels.

“No. No way.....it is impossible. No, this must be it. Radun, spit out the other pieces of the Three Marvels!”

Ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun spat out the other two pieces at Ark’s command. It happened when Ark held all three pieces of the Three Marvels in his hand. An intense light emerged from the Three Marvels and the pieces combined into one. Thus the Three Marvels which had changed into one disc returned to Ark’s hand again.

‘This disc must be the original form of the Three Marvels.’

Then a dim light shot upwards from the centre of the disc. The light turned into a strange shape.

‘What the? This shape? Where have I seen it before before.....?’

Ark went through his memories before he remembered. It was the ‘Magic Eye.’ Although it seemed strange at first, after adjusting his eyes the light actually looked like a 3D image where a strange figure was floating. Then the original disc contained information about Hero Maban’s legacy like he expected? Ark had an idea and changed his focus. Like he thought, three dimensional forms started appearing. However, the colours were so tangled up like in a colour blindness test that it was impossible to figure out what the shapes were.

‘Damn, what is this? How about I supposed to look at these forms.....ah!’

“Eyes of the Cat!”

Ark instantly used Eyes of the Cat. Yes, Hero Maban was a Meow. If he created something only the Truthseeker could skill then the key would lie with the Meow. It was the Meow technique related to the eyes!

The environment changed to green while the various colours mixed together to form vivid letters.

*I am Hero Maban of the Meow clan.*

*A long time ago, I fought with my colleagues against the dark existence trying to destroy the world. And we defeated him.....is what I want to say but it is not the truth.*

*The dark existence was a lot stronger than we thought so all that we could do was use all our power to seal it. Although it is frightening, we guessed that the dark existence would be resurrected one day.*

*That's why I scattered the pieces of the Three Marvels all over the world.*

*For the person who found this.....you will have to face the fearful darkness and confront the harsh edge.....but I will give you the power to face the darkness. Although I'm leaving this message, I realize that it is difficult to face the dark existence with your current strength.*

*Darkness is needed to confront the dark.*

*Rather than the darkness of anger and insanity, this is the true power of darkness..... But there isn't that much time for me to explain your destiny. That's why I entrusted my powers to a friend who will live for eternity.*

*You'll understand why you have to go there when you meet him.*

*If you are ready to accept that destiny.....*

*You will find power when you understand the meaning of true darkness.*

After the message ended, the colours mixed together and a new message formed.

*Heaven and earth, life and death, find the place where they are reversed and follow the hero's star path.*

*Look for the forgotten battlefield and let the scattered pieces of the moon from the top of the best seat lead you to the resting place.*

*The person who has forgotten the time in the true darkness will welcome you.*

Then the writing changed again and a three dimensional map appeared. The recognizable terrain.....it was a 3D image of Seutandal. One part of the map indicated the place where the first clue would be found. Surprisingly Ark knew the place that was indicated. It was the territory of the undead where the City of the Dead was located.

'The last Three Marvels was in vampire territory and now I need to go to the land of the undead? Is this a coincidence? Or is it based on probabilities?'

No matter how realistic it was, New World is still a game. So the events that happened were arranged artificially. From his experience, unexpected incidents that took place in other games didn't appear in New World. In order for an incident to spread, a certain event must have happened.

'The reason Hero Maban's legacy is hidden in the undead territory.....what is it?'

Ark remained confused. Then there was a dinging sound and the quest information window appeared.

-Profession Change Quest: Great Legacy

You have obtained all the pieces of the Three Marvels left behind by Hero Maban. As the Truthseeker, you have chased after the footprints of Hero Maban and finally gathered all of the Three Marvels. That journey wasn't just to obtain the Three Marvels. The true meaning of the journey was to understand and befriend the mermaids, the raccoon clan and the wolf clan. Now you are finally ready to inherit Hero Maban's true legacy. Solve the clues left behind in the Three Marvels to find Hero Maban's legacy.

<Difficulty: ???

Quest Restriction: Dark Walker, Star Fragment, Dark Piece, Moon Piece>

'Quest to change profession!'

Finally, he received the quest to change to the Dark Walker's second stage profession. Ark thought that he would change professions after finding the Three Marvels. He hadn't expected to receive a class change quest. He had already read all the notes regarding the quests that the people who had changed to their second profession posted. In fact, changing to the 2nd stage profession was a lot harder in New World compared to other online games because a prerequisite was required to trigger the quest. However, Ark had finally met the prerequisite and received the quest. The compensation for changing to his second profession would be huge!

'It doesn't matter if I change it today or tomorrow as long as it is resolved. Besides, I don't understand the reason why it is in the undead territory.'

"Let's go! Racard, Radun, Buksil and Baekgu."

Ark set off at a lively pace. His next goal was Razak and his second stage profession!

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"Damn, nothing is going my way."

Recently Jewel had become quite dissatisfied with his life. Jewel's daily life had become really stressful after the failure of the Seutandal mission. If Jewel had managed to occupy Seutandal then the Hermes Guild would have enormous potential. And that huge mission had been appointed to a high ranking officer, Jewel. However, the results were different from the expected jackpot. Before the

reinforcements that they spend 30 million on arrived, Jewel's army had already been smashed to pieces. Who wouldn't be mad after wasting 30 million won? But that wasn't the only reason for Jewel's anger. It had been over a month since Seutandal rose. But the Hermes guild was unable to enter Seutandal openly. Of course, the Hermes guild wasn't officially banned from Seutandal. However, Haman fortress was the centre of Seutandal and it was currently in the control of the autonomous group led by JusticeMan and the Dark Brothers. They knew about the Hermes guild so it was difficult to step foot on Seutandal. Therefore the Hermes members had a lot of complaints. And their dissatisfaction was focused on Jewel who was in charge of the Seutandal mission. Therefore, Jewel status as the top 2 of the Hermes guild fell to the very bottom.

'It's all because of that bastard Ark!'

Jewel ground his teeth together and kicked a stone. Ark.....ah, why did someone so annoying exist in the world? It wasn't necessary to explain the reason why. In the old days, Jewel had failed to win the Evil Silrion, the siege on Silvana failed and the conquest of Seutandal also failed because of Ark.

'That's not all. I broke up with my girlfriend a month ago, a lost my wallet a month ago and my mother started lecturing me yesterday. Everything is because of that bastard!'

Jewel paranoia had reached the stage where he might be recommended to undergo psychiatric treatment.

'Anyway, I will never forgive him.'

Unfortunately, Jewel had no room for revenge at the moment. Although Nagaran had been quiet for a while because of the 5 coalitions, the clouds of war had started circling again. Thus Raiden had convened an emergency meeting of the alliances to deal with the situation. There was no room for Jewel to roam around looking for revenge.

'In addition, I hate to admit it.....'

He wasn't a match for Ark anymore. In order to catch Ark, he needed a minimum of 10 people and a maximum of 15 people to do it. However, it was impossible for Jewel to take that many people away in this war situation. However.....

'While I'm stuck here, isn't that Ark bastard carelessly running around?'

The thought was enough to make him bristle.

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

Jewel had been thinking furiously when something suddenly happened. A roaring sound echoed through the whole castle.

“What, what the? What is that?”

“Jewel-nim, it is serious!”

A guild member ran in and shouted at Jewel.

“There are people attacking the gate!”

“The gate? Somebody has invaded without declaring war?”

“No, there is only two people attacking.”

“Two? Only two people? Two people are attacking the gate? Then this sound is caused by only two people? Jeez, what are the guard NPCs doing?”

“I only heard the NPCs so I don’t know either.”

“.....What, what the, this is?”

Jewel opened his mouth after running towards the gate. There really was only 2 people attacking the gate. It was a barbarian wearing leather armour and an elf magician wearing silver armour. However, their behaviour exceeded Jewel’s common sense. Even time the barbarian swung his weapon, the gate’s endurance would fall like it had been hit by a catapult. Of course, there were also guard NPCs near the gate. Although they didn’t participate in the sieges, the guard NPCs were given along with the servants. And the guards’ mission was to prevent trespassers. However, the guards couldn’t get near the barbarian.

“Ah, it’s really annoying.”

The elf magician sitting behind the barbarian waved her hand while yawning. Every time she did that, the guards would be thrown back dozens of metres.

“Redian, don’t kill them. It will become annoying if we kill NPCs in Nagaran.”

“Why is this stone head giving me advice? I know already.”

“Well, you’re always so fickle.”

‘Oh my god, these people are.....!’

Jewel watched the two people conversing with wide eyes.

‘Why are those people here? No, now is not the time to be doing this.’

“W-wait a minute! Bread hyung-nim, Redian noona, please stop!”

“Huh? What the, that is?”

The barbarian stopped swinging his sword as Jewel came running. Yes, the barbarian warrior and elf magician was Bread and Redian. They were hiding after killing dozens of tourists in Seutandal.

“How does he know us?”

Bread scratched his head while Redian poked out her tongue and replied.

“Have you already forgotten? This is Jewel who followed us around for a while in the old days.”

“Ah ah, that’s right. That guy was here?”

“Well, originally he was quite close to Raiden.”

“Heh, his habit of following other people around hasn’t changed.”

While Bread and Redian were flirting, Jewel gasped and said.

“Hyung-nim, noona, long time no see. But what are you doing here? No, why are you attacking the gate? Are you in a bad mood or something?”

“No, well, it’s not really a bad mood.....”

Bread scratched his head while Redian bluntly replied.

“The guards said we had to go through all these formalities to get permission to enter from the Hermes guild. We became annoyed so Bread decided to just knock.”

“K-knock? That was a knock?”

Jewel looked at the gate with a bemused look. Although the gates could endure the catapults for hours, it’s durability had already been decreased by 10%.

‘Dammit, repairing the gate is expensive.....’

Anger welled up inside Jewel but he didn't dare show it to the two in front of him. But Redian and Bread had no interest anyway.

"You came out anyway. Where is Raiden? There is something we wanted to discuss with him."

"He is the castle's Lord. What did you need....."

"Do you want us to explain it again to each of you?"

"Ah, no. Then follow me."

Jewel flinched and guided them through the castle. Finally they entered the office where Raiden spoke in an annoyed tone.

"What the hell Jewel? Why was it so noisy.....?"

"Yo Raiden. It's been a while."

Raiden raised his head with surprise at Bread's voice.

"Bread? Redian? How are you? Have you made up your minds already?"

"Our minds? What are you talking about?"

"Ah I remember. He's talking about how he asked us to join the guild."

"What, he did?"

Bread replied in a confused tone before Redian spoke.

"I told you that we have no interest."

"I would give you guys the best treatment."

"Shut up! Don't say the same things several times. We're not interested."

Bread banged his bayonet into the ground and shouted.

"We wanted to talk to you about something. Didn't you mention a guy to us?"

"A guy I mentioned?"

"You know, the fellow you wanted us to handle. That fellow who could turn himself into a black wolf. Do you know what that guy is now?"

"Black wolf.....you mean Ark?"

Raiden stuttered after searching through his memory. After Jewel suffered from Ark's attacks in Seutandal, Raiden judged that he had become too difficult for Jewel and Duke to handle. Therefore he had asked some people he was acquainted with to kill Ark. The people who he first contacted was Bread and Redian. However, both of them had been busy with Asyubell's quest so they rejected it. Redian nodded at Raiden's words.

"His name is Ark? That reminds me, I've heard that name mentioned a lot by the NPCs in Haman fortress."

"But why do you want to find Ark?"

"It'll take a while to explain.

Bread and Redian sighed before talking. After struggling with Asyubell's quest for a few months, they had failed thanks to some tourists so they swore revenge. But no matter how hard they tried to collect information, nobody would tell them his name. That's because Ark had firmly told the NPCs in Seutandal not to leak any information about him. It was only after they destroyed the sightseeing office in Haman fortress that they realized their target had already left Seutandal. Therefore they chased their target to the continent. However, the continent was huge compared to Seutandal so finding one user was like finding a needle in the desert.

"While wandering around, we saw the video about Seutandal on the TV."

It was the video that Buksil had sold to the broadcasting station. The user who made Seutandal rise was a black wolf! They remembered Raiden's commission after watching the video. Raiden smiled and nodded after their explanation.

".....So that's what happened."

"Now it's your turn. Do you know where he is?"

"I do not know the details. But I do know his approximate location. You said that you chased him to the continent? But he has already returned to Seutandal a fortnight ago."

"What, what the? Are you sure about that information?"

"Yes, an informant in Haman Fortress confirmed his face."

"Informant? You still play the game using such boring methods."

"That is my style."

Raiden grinned and replied. In fact, Raiden hadn't completely abandoned Seutandal. Although the situation in Nagaran meant he had to withdraw for a while, he still maintained the alliance with the Nakujuk and was waiting for a chance. Even though the Baran clan was occupying Haman fortress, that situation could change at any time. Therefore Raiden had sneaked an information into Haman fortress and used the Nakujuk to disrupt their trade.

'It is not too late yet. Even though the Baran is currently occupying Seutandal, the Nakujuk are still powerful. If I hinder their trade and increase the lawlessness around the harbour, there is a chance to reverse the situation. The problem is Ark. He might interfere again.'

Raiden was worried about Ark's presence. Of course, Raiden didn't think that Ark could challenge the entire Hermes Alliance. But Ark had a strange way of complicating the situation.

'Anyway, I have to hide the information about Ark from the Hermes Alliance. But now that these two also have a grudge against Ark.....it is a chance.'

Raiden organized his thoughts and spoke again.

"Did you want to join forces?"

"What?"

"Presently Ark is somewhere in Seutandal. As you know, we also have a grudge against Ark. If you want then I will help you sneak into Seutandal. Don't worry, no other conditions are required. All I want is for you to kill Ark. That's all."

".....It is hard to know what you are thinking."

"How about it? Will you accept?"

"Yes, although I don't trust your intentions there is no need to waste your resources."

"Okay, then I'll message my lawless contacts."

"Ah, okay, then we'll be going."

Bread and Redian headed back towards Seutandal. Jewel followed them to the gate and smiled at their backs.

"Huhuhu, now that Ark is ruined."

“But even Jewel-nim and Duke-nim couldn’t deal with Ark. Would those two be able to handle him? Are the two of them that strong?”

A guild member watching from nearby asked with concern and Jewel laughed.

“Do you know about pioneers?”

“Yes, aren’t they users like Jewel-nim who participated in the beta test? Thanks to the previous knowledge, they managed to raise their characters more quickly.”

“Yes, I’m a pioneer. But those two are on a different level. They are the last pioneers.”

“Last pioneers?”

“Huhuhu, it is a legend among pioneers.”

Jewel was like an old magician talking to his students about the past.

“A few months before the beta test ended, there was a public announcement and every user gathered on an island in Bristania. There was no time to gather information about levels or skills in PVP. After a few days of preparing their skills and equipment, a battle royale began.”

“Battle Royale?”

“Yes, an infinite killing competition!”

Jewel said and laughed.

“Even the NPCs that the users saw were killed.”

The battle royale started one day before the beta test ended. Users who died couldn’t be resurrected for 24 hours so it was the end.

“It was a really intense contest. Over 1000 people were gathered on the island and started killing each other. No matter how hard me and Duke fought, we only managed to endure for 2 hours. Raiden hyung-nim lasted 7 hours. And the people who survived until the end of the beta test was only two people. They were Bread and Redian.”

“That’s why they are called the last pioneers.....?”

“That’s right. That most surprising thing was that Redian and Bread weren’t teamed up at the time. The two people remaining simply couldn’t defeat each other. It lasted until the test finished. Well, now they seem quite friendly with each other.”

"Then it is possible to put an end to Ark."

"An end? No, this is just the beginning."

Jewel gave an evil grin and muttered. In fact, users could be killed several times in the game. That's why Ark had built up a strong support base of users.

"I will tear down his support base."

Jewel had realised that Ark had two support bases. One was the Baran clan in the Eastern Nation of Seutandal. The second was Lancel village in the Argus Mountains. During the decisive battle in Seutandal, the residents of Lancel village had appeared through the dimensional gate. After investigating the village, he saw that Ark had a store there.

'The Hermes Alliance will eventually take back Seutandal. All that will remain is his support base in Lancel village and that will be settled once Nagaran quiets down.'

Jewel had been worried that Ark might interfere. However, Ark would be no problem if he had already been battered by Redian and Bread.

"Then I will deal the final blow to Ark! Hahaha, I can't wait to see his expression when he encounters Bread and Redian and then when he loses his support base! I'll make him regret messing with me, hahaha!"

Jewel laughed crazily as he looked at the sky. He was like the evil magicians who appeared in old stories.

### **Act 3: Mother**

"How is it? Do you like it?"

Hyun-woo looked at his mother's expression and laughed. Her expression indicated that his mother still couldn't understand the situation. She stared blankly at the house for a while before speaking in a hesitant voice.

"You really rented this house?"

"How many times have I said it? It is just like I said."

"But the money required to rent this place....."

“Mother, a son should have this much capabilities.”

“But the rental deposit for a house near the hospital.....you didn’t have to go through all that trouble. I never dared imagine a house like this.....”

“Mother doesn’t have to worry about unnecessary things like that. This much is nothing.”

Hyun-woo spoke with a proud expression and stared at the house. The rented house was a 3 storey house with a small garden.

‘I was worried at first but I somehow managed to make it!’

Over the past two months, Hyun-woo had almost gone insane with worry. The deposit fee for the rented house was 80 million won. Excluding the contract signing deposit, that was 60 million won. Thus Hyun-woo had spent the last two months running after money.

‘What will I do if I don’t have the money after two months? What is something unexpected happens?’

The thought of having no money to pay the deposit filled Hyun-woo with extreme anxiety. In addition, 60 million won wasn’t the type of money that Hyun-woo who only graduated from high school would have. After paying the hospital bills and the cost of living, he had a few million won at most. He had lived without making a deposit account in his bankbook. So naturally money was main thing on Hyun-woo’s mind. He was unsure if he could gather the rest of the rental deposit money in the two months so he had been quite restless. In the end he worried for nothing. After converting his gold to money, Hyun-woo’s assets was a lot more than expected. And he was able to have that type of gold because of ‘Ark.’

Aside from Ark, Hyun-woo also had the rehabilitation members, Roco, Sid, the three baby pig brothers and Lariette to help. After all, Ark had Sid and the three pig brothers in his group so that was 4 merchants. In wasn’t an exaggeration to say that Hyun-woo was in charge of asset management after investing in various projects. It was thanks to those investments that he could settle the rent balance. Hyun-woo now summarized the order that the money was deposited in his bankbook.

First from Buksil. Buksil had sold the items obtained in Magaro’s laboratory for 10% more than he expected so Hyun-woo received 3,200 gold. Then there was Sid who sold the 16,000 ores Ark received in Seutandal. In fact, Hyun-woo had intended to sell the raccoons living in Lancel village the ore. But no matter how much the raccoons like the ore, it was impossible to sell all of the 16,000 ores. And according to the law of supply and demand, the price would go down the more available the item

was. That was when Sid heard the news and appeared like the wind. Sid used the information of the Continental Commerce Firm to check the ore price in Schudenberg Kingdom, then he used Sapjil and Ulmeok to increase the price. Thanks to that, Ark was able to dispose of all the ore and the profits was 30% more than he expected. So he earned 2,400 gold from that. During the several months Roco managed the store, she earned around 1000 gold! Just those three alone was 6,600 gold. That amount had exceeded his target goal.

‘Huhuhu, I also can’t forget about Alan’s help.’

Hyun-woo smiled and remembered the 9,000,000 won that had been deposited in his bankbook a few days ago. It was the price Hyun-woo received for selling the Steel Shield of Hatred and Despair he received from Wigurima in Ageiron. Hyun-woo had been disappointed after confirming the performance of the item. Although it was a level 300 boss, all Wigurima dropped was a rare shield which wouldn’t sell for that much. The most he would gain for it was 3 million won. But he received an instant purchase request the moment he sold it on the auction site. Surprisingly the person who requested it was Charming Man, Alan’s ID. Hyun-woo checked that it was the same ID who bought the gloves and his hypothesis was confirmed.

‘There’s no doubt. Alan also previously bought the Plated Gauntlets of Corrupted Hatred which had a skill related to the Hatred stat. The Steel Shield of Hatred and Despair is also the same. The only reason he would buy such items is because of the hatred stat. Alan is collecting set items.’

If this was true than the situation was different. People would normally look at the market price of the item before deciding how much they would spend on it. But Alan was rich. If he wasn’t after set items then he wouldn’t give up no matter the price. Thus Hyun-woo raised the price to triple the amount and managed to sell it for 9 million won.

‘Alan might be a surprisingly good guy.’

Thus Alan’s intimacy with Hyun-woo increased quickly without him even knowing. Of course, Alan would never wish for that to happen.....

Anyway, thanks to Alan Ark had 15 million won left in his account after paying off the rent deposit. But it wasn’t all good. Hyun-woo’s wallet thickening meant that Ark’s wallet had thinned. Thus he was once again saving 1 copper every day. Although he was attempting to save every copper he could, he wasn’t worried about starving to death.

‘And accomplishing that goal is not for me along.’

Hyun-woo looked proudly at his mother. Hyun-woo's goal over the last two months had been to live together with his mother and that was his mother's goal as well. Physical therapy and rehabilitation was essential. So she put in a lot of effort and moved her body whenever possible.

'What is that? Of course someone sick would try to get better.'

.....There might be people who thought like that. However, those who have stayed for a long time in the hospital or who had family there knew that it wasn't an easy task. Hyun-woo had watched his mother struggle for 6 years so he knew all too well. At first all patients admitted to the hospital would try to get better. But after one month passed and then one year, most people would have misgivings. There would be a feeling of helplessness from living so many years with medical treatment and it was easy to give up. It was natural. Therefore they accepted that they couldn't be completely cured.

"The patient will have to cross the most difficult mountain to receive a complete cure."

That was something a doctor had said one year after his mother had been hospitalized. It was natural. Sometimes it was difficult for the sick person to endure the pain that came with the treatment. That's why doctors would say that 'the patient's will is the most important.' It was one of their favourite phrases when treating people. But his mother endured it. 'I can get better'.....no, she never lost her commitment and she improved so much that the doctors were surprised and discharged her from the ICU.

"I wanted to tell you this. Patient Park So-mi really is like a honour roll student. Her figures have all improved so much compared to two months ago. The hospital treats people with the idea that the patients' motivation is the most important but I never thought it would be so effective..... She must really want to live with Hyun-woo ssi. Although she should still be careful, a complete recovery in the future doesn't seem that distant."

The doctor in charge explained how eagerly his mother had been receiving treatment.

'My troubles are nothing compared to my mother's suffering.'

After 6 years apart, Hyun-woo and his mother were really eager to live together. Fortunately that dream could now be achieved. Yes, now his mother was healthy enough to be an outpatient and she was rewarded with a lovely house with a garden. But his mother looked at Hyun-woo with worried eyes and said.

"Hyun-woo, your mother can't live here if you've obtained it through bad acts."

Why were all mothers the same in this situation? Hyun-woo pouted and whined like a child.

"Why doesn't Mother believe in her son? I've received a lot of education from mother so I know what bad acts are. Look at these clear eyes. They are innocent. They're gentle like the eyes of a newborn baby."

"..... They might be gentle and innocent but they are still impudent."

"It is genetic. Anyway, I have done nothing that I am ashamed of. In addition, you don't have to be concerned because Hwa-rang ajusshi looked after me while you were in hospital."

"Oh, it's been a couple of days since I've seen Detective Gwon. What has he been doing?"

His mother suddenly spoke in a concerned tone. Then a smirk appeared on Hyun-woo's face.

"Aha, the reason you've been looking around restlessly is because of Hwa-rang ajusshi. Huhuhu, he's the first thing you looked for when I started talking. Is that how it is? When did your relationship progress so much?"

"W-what are you saying.....?"

"What's wrong? I am turning 24 this year."

"24 years old.....that's right..... You were 18.....now you're already 24 years old.....6 years....."

His mother's face instantly darkened at Hyun-woo's words.

'Ah, I made a mistake.'

Hyun-woo belatedly realized. In fact, his mother always became melancholy whenever Hyun-woo's age was mentioned. She seemed to be thinking about how long she had been a heavy baggage for her son. Hyun-woo started talking in order to change the atmosphere.

"Hwa-rang ajusshi and the hyungs are waiting at the house."

"At the house?"

"Yes, this is the first time I'm seeing the house after all my things were moved. I've been busy the last few days. So Hwa-rang ajusshi and the hyungs entered the house first to organize the baggage."

In fact, Hyun-woo had paid off the deposit just before the battle with Karakul began. So while the game unit and internet had been installed at the new house, he had been playing at the game arcades. He was seeing the new house for the first time with his mother so he felt anticipation and excitement.

"Come on, let's enter!"

Hyun-woo pushed her wheelchair energetically and finally entered their new home. There was the noisy sound of firecrackers as they walked through the front door.

"Surprise!"

"Noonim (formal way of saying older sister for males), congratulations on your discharge!"

Gwon Hwa-rang and the rehabilitation members were all gathered near the front door. Hyun-woo realized how comfortable his new residence was after seeing them gathered in one spot. The rehabilitation members were so huge that there was no space to move or breath in his old place. But the living room in their new place was so large that it felt like the rehabilitation members could play soccer in it.

"Hehehe, noonim, you have come."

The rehabilitation members flocked around them.

"Thank you. You didn't need to come....."

"Why are you talking like that?"

"We are men."

"Hyun-woo is our younger brother. So noonim is like a mother to us."

"Oh, that reminds me? Should we call you mother?"

Then Gwon Hwa-rang's face hardened.

"Hey you! Don't say something so disgusting! Park-nim is different from you guys who have the DNA of animals. And who would want to have a child your age?"

"Sheesh, why are you mentioning our age? Anyway, I was just joking."

"DNA? Why is hyung-nim mentioning DNA in this situation?"

"We've endured it until now, but hyung-nim is like a wolf drooling over noonim who is little Red Riding Hood."

"It's true. Noonim, it's not too late. He is like the wolf who disguised as the grandmother. You should escape before he eats you. We'll risk our lives to help you escape!"

"What, what the, these guys?"

"Hohohoho. Thank you. But Detective Gwon seems more like a bear than a wolf to me."

His mother burst out laughing as she stared at the quarrelling Gwon Hwa-rang and rehabilitation members. Gwon Hwa-rang who had been grabbing Jjak-tung's collar awkwardly laughed and blushed.

"Hahaha, yes I am a bear. I'm not a wolf."

"Sheesh, suddenly a bear is really good. Tsk tsk, this old bachelor.....get out of the way."

Jjak-tung and Tazza kicked Gwon Hwa-rang and pushed him into a corner. Then they lowered their heads and smiled.

"Now, let's forget about the animal who doesn't know whether he is a wolf or a bear. Anyway, we are Hyun-woo's older brothers so we've prepared a small gift to congratulate noonim on your discharge."

When his words finished, a bouquet and cake suddenly appeared in their two hands. Then clapped her hands like a young girl and asked with startled eyes.

"Omo, it is amazing. Are you two magicians?"

"Heh, there is nothing we can't do."

They were an ex-conman and gambler so such tricks were easy for them. Anyway, then came the really amazing part.

"Shut up. All you could come up with was a bouquet and cake?"

"That's right, now it's our turn!"

Bul-kkun and the other rehabilitation members lined up in front of his mother. Then the 'love of the rehabilitation members' game began.

"We've prepared a gift for noonim."

"Now, please look over here. The living room window is protected by the elegant windows. I know a merchant who specifically makes high end curtains. The 100% feel of silk when touching! It also has antibacterial and fungal control and is good for your health."

Yapsab explained the curtains with a rapt expression. Then Bu Dong-san stuck out his tongue and interrupted.

"Bah, you foolish fellow!" How will be curtain be useful for her health? This fellow doesn't understand houses. Noonim, please look down at the floor. Do you see the flooring? Hahaha, that's right. This is called jade flooring. Indeed, isn't this the best material for the floor?"

Then it was Hae Gyeol-sa's turn.

"Heh, short, too short. These fellows are thinking in such a short sighted manner. Are they only seeing the bottom? Who cares about the flooring? Look a little higher. The most important thing is lighting. Don't you see the TV? Doesn't the mood of the interior depend on the lighting? Noonim, I've prepared for you a lighting system with 3 wavelengths and matching wallpaper."

"Hahaha, what silly people!"

At that time, audible laughter was heard which shook the living room. He turned around and saw that Bul-kkun and Ddeok-dae were laughing.

"Curtains? Flooring? Lighting? Wallpaper? This is why you guys are only capable of cheap tricks. Isn't health the most important thing? If you eat well then you will become healthier. That's why I prepared this! A high end kitchen and refrigerator set!"

"And I've prepared a profession exercise set for your rehabilitation!"

"I'll like to see any of you beat this. Our eye level is different from you. Hahaha!"

Bul-kkun and Ddeok-dae indicated towards the flashy kitchen and exercise equipment. Then the remaining rehabilitation members sank to the ground and murmured with sad faces.

“Ugh, how regrettable.”

“The most important thing is definitely food and exercise.”

“I only thought to buy kitchenware.....”

Gwon Hwa-rang finally noticed a change and quickly interrupted.

“Park-nim, I’ve prepared something as well. I’ve prepared a first class bed! It has a threefold spring structure and is very good for your back. Furthermore, it is so robust that you can use it for 10 years.”

However, all he got in return was the teasing of the rehabilitation members.

“As expected from an old bachelor. Disguising something blatant as a present.....”

“In addition, 10 years? Isn’t he intending to secretly prepare items for marriage? How sneaky.....”

“Ohhh, please return to your zoo. You unscrupulous old man!”

“W-what are these brats talking about? I just.....”

Gwon Hwa-rang face quickly turned red. Then Hyun-woo looked around the house with surprised eyes and asked the Gwon Hwa-rang and the rehabilitation members.

“Ajusshi, hyung-nims, this is the reason why you asked me for the key?”

“Well, it’s like we said. We wanted to prepare it beforehand.....”

“Did you think you were alone?”

Gwon Hwa-rang and the rehabilitation members studied Hyun-woo’s face before talking. Hyun-woo was the type who didn’t like receiving one-sided help. Therefore Gwon Hwa-rang and the rehabilitation members had prepared the gifts for Hyun-woo secretly. In fact, Hyun-woo had expected it to some extent. When considering their close relationship, he had expected one or two gifts. But Hyun-woo thought it would just be a few pots or pans. He never imagined that he would receive such large gifts. However, Hyun-woo’s reaction was different from what the rehabilitation members expected and he was just deeply moved. Hyun-woo wasn’t moved by the value of the gifts. It was because he could feel the thought and regard put into each gift. It was also for the sake of his mother.....

Yes, Hyun-woo didn’t like receiving things one-sidedly. But if it was for his mother.....

"Thank you. Ajusshi, hyung-nims, thank you very much."

Hyun-woo was moved to tears and bowed. When was it? When was the last time he felt this much gratitude towards someone? And the last time he sincerely thanked someone?

"Eh? What the? What's with this guy?"

"So....isn't this much expected?"

The rehabilitation members blushed and scratched their heads at the unexpected response. Gwon Hwa-rang and the rehabilitation members looked at Hyun-woo awkwardly while his mother wore a soft smile. There was a subtle silence. Suddenly the front door slammed open and Jung Hye-sun came in whining.

"Huk huk, I've arrived. Huh? What's wrong with everyone?"

Jung Hye-sun asked after belatedly noticing the awkward atmosphere. Hyun-woo just tilted his head to one side.

"Eh? Hye-sun, you have today off?"

"Ah, what are you saying? The day your mother is discharged from hospital is a national holiday."

"National holiday? Today is a holiday? Isn't it a weekday?"

Hyun-woo asked but Jung Hye-sun just ignored him and approached his mother.

"Mother, I've arrived."

"Thank you for coming."

"What do you mean? Of course I'm going to come. Today is the happiest day for me apart from Independence Day. Furthermore, I can't leave Mother alone with these oversized brothers."

"Hohoho, it is good that you're so bright. How are you?"

Jung Hye-sun had visited the hospital several times so she had become quite close to his mother. Yes, but the original person concerned how no idea Jung Hye-sun considered her a mother in law. The strategy to win him over had already begun a long time ago. Hyun-woo looked at the exchange with confusion and asked.

"But what is that huge backpack? Did you have some business?"

“Oh, this? I can’t just let this day pass without celebrating. So I made a few things.”

“Who’s going to eat all of that?”

“Hyun-woo doesn’t know about the eating habits of the others. This much might not be enough.”

Jung Hye-sun just shrugged. The rehabilitation members nodded with serious faces.

“Huhuhu, as expected from our little cutie. She knows us too well.”

“Now let’s eat and drink.”

“Hey, Landlord! What are you looking at? Order snacks and drinks!”

Then Jung Hye-sun who had been taking out the food raised her eyebrows and said.

“What? I said there would be no drinking.”

“Eh? W-what are you talking about?”

“How can we eat all that food without any alcohol?”

“Yes, you know. Alcohol is like a digestive for us!”

“Ohhhh, it’s a tyranny!”

They were acting like they wanted to run onto the streets and give a candlelight protest.

“Noisy!”

However, they immediately quieted and lowered their tails like a dog when Jung Hye-sun shouted. Their year of experience with Jung Hye-sun meant they knew when not to push the line. In the past, the rehabilitation members had experienced all sorts of hardships like being threatened with knives in alleys. They never lost their courage.....but now their lips protruded and they whined like children.

“We can’t eat our meals without some alcohol.”

Ah, were they truly gangsters in the past? Anyway, their protest worked. His mother looked at Jung Hye-sun with a charming smile.

“Isn’t a little bit of alcohol okay?”

"But Mother, they turn into animals when they get drunk."

"That's okay. All men get a little noisy when they're drunk. A woman only needs to worry when a man is too quiet. Hyun-woo, you go and buy it."

"Ohhh, as expected of noonim!"

"I'll swear allegiance to you!"

The rehabilitation members voluntarily swore their support after her decision. So at his neat new house.....just by looking at the prepared food, a party of an extravagant scale had begun. The rehabilitation members ravenously ate their food and drank alcohol while teasing Gwon Hwa-rang about his mother, forcing him to drink. But Hyun-woo was actually confused about Jung Hye-sun.

"We've just moved downstairs. Nice to meet you."

While the food was being unpacked, Jung Hye-sun greeted the 2nd and 3rd floor residents and even the next door neighbours. After she returned, she attached herself to his mother's side and chattered tirelessly. Hyun-woo had no experience with dating or a sense of strategy, so he couldn't understand that Hye-sun was trying to get close to his mother. Although it was difficult to form a conclusion yet, the strategy was getting good results.

'Why is she so friendly?'

Jung Hye-sun seemed different to Hyun-woo for some reason. Around that time, an enormous hindrance to Jung Hye-sun's plan appeared.

Ding dong, ding dong.

While they were all getting suitably drunk, the sound of the doorbell was heard.

"Eh? Who is it? There should be no more people.....eh?"

Hyun-woo's mouth dropped with surprise when he opened the front door. A person he never imagined in this place had visited.

"Hello? Hasn't it been a long time since I've seen you in real life?"

"Mi-su ssi?"

Amazingly, the person who arrived was Lariette or Kang Mi-su.

They met often in New World but it had been 1 year since they've seen each other in reality.

"Why is Mi-su ssi here?"

"Mi-su ssi? Ah, Lariette-nim? We invited her."

Bul-kkun heard Hyun-woo's question and replied.

"Hyung-nim invited her?"

"Yes, Lariette-nim has spent quite a lot of time with us. This is the long awaited chance to say hello properly so we invited her. By the way.....you truly are a beauty."

Bul-kkun looked at Kang Mi-su's face while chewing on a piece of squid. Hyun-woo also agreed on that point. Just like Ark's face resembled Hyun-woo, Lariette also resembled Kang Mi-su. Because Lariette and Hyun-woo had spent a lot of time together, he had been slightly desensitized to her face. However after meeting her again in reality, his heart started thumping like it was their first meeting. No matter how realistic the virtual reality character, it couldn't outperform the original.

'She seems to have become prettier than before.'

"Come in. Everybody has been waiting for Lariette-nim."

"Thank you."

Kang Mi-su smiled and entered the living room. When Kang Mi-su entered the living room.....Hyun-woo and Bul-kkun weren't the only people affected by her. The moment she entered, the once boisterous atmosphere became quiet. The rehabilitation members had spent a lot of time with Lariette but this was the first time they've actually seen Kang Mi-su. Ddeok-dae, Hae Gyeol-sa, Jjak-tung, Tazza and Yapsab all opened their mouths absentmindedly and stared at Kang Mi-su. Kang Mi-su hesitated before handing a bouquet of flowers and a toilet paper set to Hyun-woo's mother.

"I heard from Oppa. Congratulations on your discharge. This is a small house warming gift."

"Thank you. But how do you know Hyun-woo?"

"Just.....I've received a lot of help from him in various ways."

Kang Mi-su attempted to read Hyun-woo's face before answering. Anyway, all the interest focuses on one topic after she appeared. Hyun-woo had previously

mentioned that she had a rich boyfriend. Therefore the rehabilitation members hadn't made any moves on her but who wouldn't be tempted when a pretty girl was seated with them? They were also tipsy thanks to all the alcohol.

"Now all the leaders of the autonomous group in Seutandal have been gathered. I'm Bul-kkun. I'll get you a glass."

"Get out of the way! Hehehe, I am Yapsab. You're an elf even in reality."

"Have you ever heard that you resemble a celebrity?"

The rehabilitation members enthusiastically welcomed Kang Mi-su and blatantly competed for a seat next to her. However, they forgot about one person until they needed her.....

"Hey, Hye-sun. This dish is empty. Get us a little more."

"And this one as well!"

Jung Hye-sun immediately started to feel displeased.

'Bah, what the? Why was this woman invited?'

Jung Hye-sun lips tightened and she glared at Kang Mi-su. She had learnt Lariette's name from the recordings. When Hyun-woo had dropped by Lancel village to obtain the Sacred Soil, Lariette was also with him.

Then she heard Jana the Meow shaman talk about the other woman with Ark. Thus Jung Hye-sun questioned the rehabilitation members about Kang Mi-su. The rehabilitation members said that Hyun-woo mentioned Lariette had a boyfriend so she stopped paying attention.

'But.....'

This time she saw her directly. Her woman's instinct warned her that Kang Mi-su was a shrewd fox! No, it wasn't just a simple feeling. After Kang Mi-su appeared, Hyun-woo's attitude began to feel uncomfortable somehow. He made an uneasy face every time the rehabilitation members rushed to her. Jung Hye-sun was definitely disturbed by Hyun-woo's restless movements. Therefore Jung Hye-sun turned her misgivings into hostility towards Kang Mi-su.

'Deception is overflowing from that woman..... I heard she has a boyfriend but I can't be careless. Hyun-woo oppa is clearly wonderful. I don't know what but that fox might have an ulterior motive.'

This was clearly a misunderstanding. No, was it really a misunderstanding? Anyway, Jung Hye-sun felt an impending sense of crisis and approached Hyun-woo with a pleasant smile.

"Oppa, what are you doing? Lariette-nim should help me get the glasses for everyone. By the way, Unni's (female term for older female) true personality is different from how you look."

"Huh? Me?"

"Yes. I've only seen you a few times in the game but Unni seems really sly. I guess the trend in games these days is to reel in a man with a smile. Isn't it easy to receive the help of a knight when you're so pretty? Ah, I'm envious."

Kang Mi-su's face seemed slightly frozen by the end of her words.

"Hye-sun, those words are....."

"Oppa, can't you see that I'm trying to talk to Unni?"

Jung Hye-sun immediately glared at Bul-kkun who was sitting on the sidelines. Then Kang Mi-su smiled pleasantly at Jung Hye-sun and replied.

"Thanks for the compliment. But Hye-sun ssi also seems like an sly person. Although everybody is casually sitting with each other, you've stuck yourself to Hyun-woo's side. Usually women who act like that are difficult to deal with. Honestly, I don't know whether they're sly or insensitive."

"W-what?"

"Omo, did I make you feel bad?"

Kang Mi-su covered her mouth with her hand and deliberately acted like she was sorry for Jung Hye-sun. In fact, Jung Hye-sun had received the impression that Kang Mi-su was the beloved daughter of a rich family. She thought that stabbing her once would take care of it. Her impression was that Kang Mi-su had a careful personality. However, her personality wasn't as nice as Jung Hye-sun thought. She worked at the reception desk of Global Exos where she had to deal with various guests who were spiteful or nasty. A sweet character wouldn't be able to endure working there. In the game, she was also a leader of the autonomous group in Seutandal but she tended to be in the background compared to the rehabilitation members. She wasn't the type that would not retaliate after being blatantly attacked. Anyway, Jung Hye-sun's mouth dropped from the unexpected counterattack. However, she just laughed after a brief moment. Anger was building up inside her.

“Hohoho, I’m finally able to see your true personality. But I’ve known Hyun-woo oppa for a very long time. I’m in charge of Hyun-woo oppa’s store in Lancel village. Isn’t that enough intimacy?”

“Well, I’ve also known Hyun-woo ssi for 1 year. And we also travelled together in Seutandal. At that time, Hyun-woo ssi taught me how to cook and fight. If it’s that much then shouldn’t I be able to visit his house and celebrate?”

“T-that.....he taught you to fight? Cook?”

Jung Hye-sun turned around and stared at Hyun-woo. Hyun-woo just looked back with a puzzled expression. He couldn’t understand why the two females were acting like this. But the only thing more unbearable than the two females was the rehabilitation members. While Jung Hye-sun and Kang Mi-su were engaged in a psychological war over Hyun-woo, the rehabilitation members just continued eating while glaring at Hyun-woo.

“Bah, shouldn’t an older female match better with an older man?”

Meanwhile, the atmosphere was becoming more serious as the two female’s psychological warfare started deteriorating into personal attacks. Then a vein started popping on Kang Mi-su’s forehead when she heard that.

“Older woman? Omo, I didn’t know. Hye-sun ssi is younger than me? I thought you were older than me judging by your skin. Hye-sun ssi should go to a skin care place to take care of it. Should I introduce you to a good place I know?”

“What? Did you really say that?”

“What did I do?”

Kang Mi-su tilted her head to one side while pretending to be confused. Then Jung Hye-sun clenched her teeth and extended a wine glass to Hyun-woo.

“Oppa, drink this glass of wine!”

“Huh? What? Why?”

“Hyun-woo ssi, wouldn’t you prefer to drink from my glass instead?”

“Eh? But.....”

Hyun-woo became upset as he was attacked by wine glasses from both sides. Hyun-woo wasn’t so foolish that he couldn’t grasp the general atmosphere. The two women extending a wine glass at the same time was blatantly asking him ‘which one

of us do you prefer?' But Jung Hye-sun was a younger sister who took good care of his mother. Meanwhile Kang Mi-su was a woman who made his chest tremble. No, what type of man would be able to choose in this situation? How could he handle this?

'Why are they fighting? And why am I involved?'

Hyun-woo looked at the rehabilitation members with eyes begging for help. However, the rehabilitation members just looked at him with cold eyes. In this situation, not even the rehabilitation members or their grandfathers would be able to make this dreadful situation cool down.

"It can't be helped."

Just as Hyun-woo was in a desperate situation, his mother pushed her wheelchair over and poked Jung Hye-sun and Kang Mi-su on their forehead. When the two of them looked puzzled, his mother smile gently and said.

"A woman shouldn't make things so difficult for men."

To his surprise, his mother was an amazing magician! That was all she said. The two women's spirits, which was about to go crazy, calmed down. He didn't know what type of magic was used. But Jung Hye-sun and Kang Mi-su scratched their heads before blushing and withdrawing.

"I'm sorry. We unconsciously....."

"It's nothing. You reminded me of my childish past."

His mother smiled and stroked both of their heads. Just like that, the two quarrelling cats sheathed their claws. Jung Hye-sun and Kang Mi-su had no resistance against his mother. It was a powerful magic. His mother truly was amazing. However, Hyun-woo's crisis wasn't over.

"D-damn, so envious!"

"Even having such a wonderful mother.....so jealous, I can't allow it!"

The rehabilitation members rushed towards Hyun-woo and forcibly made him drink. Hyun-woo sensed the critical situation and once again looked at his mother to request help. However his mother, Jung Hye-sun and Kang Mi-su were talking with each other and were in their own female world. Hyun-woo eventually received the critical hit from the chain of alcohol and beer. How much time had passed from when the tragic incident caused by jealousy and misunderstandings started? Hyun-

woo suddenly felt a soft hand on his head. He had collapsed from the combined attack of the rehabilitation members. When he looked around the room, he couldn't see Jung Hye-sun or Kang Mi-su. In the living room, there were the corpses of the rehabilitation members strewn all over the place.

'Hah, I ended up drinking so much. Huh? Then.....'

Hyun-woo sighed and listened. After feeling the soft touch and the familiar smell, Hyun-woo realized that he was on his mother's knee. Then the voice of Gwon Hwa-rang was audible from the side.

"Pass him to me. I'll take him."

"No, leave him here a little bit longer."

His mother replied as she continued stroking his hair.

".....But this house, did Detective Gwon help obtain it? Hyun-woo won't talk about it....."

"No. I honestly wanted to help but Hyun-woo refused. Although he is concerned about his mother, he doesn't like receiving help. Hyun-woo gathered all the funds for the rental deposit by himself. Isn't it really admirable? It is uncommon for an adult of his age."

"Please don't say that."

"Huh?"

"Hyun-woo doesn't have a lot in common with adults his age? Yes, that's right. But it's not like that. The Hyun-woo I knew originally wasn't an adult. 6 years ago he was a spoiled child who didn't understand the world. I wanted the period where he could be a child to last longer. Did you know? I woke up in the ICU and heard your speech to Hyun-woo."

".....!"

"I knew at that time. The spoiled Hyun-woo was gone and he was going to be an adult.....because of me he has to become an adult....I knew. My heart was pained. Even now my heart is still hurting. Hyun-woo shouldn't have to be an adult. He should've matured at his own rate instead of being forced into it."

Suddenly, something fell on Hyun-woo's head. It was his mother's tears. His mother silently shed tears while firmly holding Hyun-woo's hand.

“How much.....all his troubles in the meantime..... How much.....”

His mother’s voice gradually became quieter. He felt a sharp pain in his chest. The hot feeling seemed to be welling up from his heart. However, Hyun-woo closed his eyes tightly and held back the tears. He swore, that day.....when his mother opened her eyes for the first time in the ICU. He would not cry in front of his mother again. He would only show a smiling expression.

## **Act 4: Land of the Dead**

Pa pa pa pa, pa pa pa pa!

Radun shook his bum as he ran across the field. The weather was good and no troublesome monsters could be seen. However, Ark’s expression while riding Radun wasn’t that bright.

“Ugh.....I still feel sick.”

Ark frowned and shook his head. The effects of the nightmarish alcohol bombs caused by the jealousy of the rehabilitation members was still affecting him. In fact, Ark wasn’t the type to become drunk easily. It was the first time the morning after had been a little difficult but it seemed tolerable after going for a light jog and sweating it off. Therefore Ark enthusiastically tried to start a new adventure.

‘Damn those dolphins!’

The dolphins he summoned at the Dark Earth was the problem. He had already experienced it when heading to Dark Earth but riding the dolphins was the worst. Aside from that, it took an incredible amount of skill to stay on every time the waves surged. Every time that happened, Ark’s stomach which he barely soothed would jump upwards. Although he didn’t get seasick, he had to endure the motion sickness from the dolphins. There was also the throbbing pain in his lower back.

‘No matter how free it is, I’ll be worried if I have to ride the dolphins regularly.’

So Ark showed his superhuman patience and endured for 4 hours. Of course, there was the possibility of a land route after he left Dark Earth. However, the land route was surrounded by mountains so it would take him many times longer to get back to Seutandal. He would rather suffer from motion sickness.

‘Anyway, I’m also affected by the alcohol. If I go on a drinking spree with expensive alcohol then of course it won’t be good for my body. Plus.....’

His face became hot as he thought of the psychological warfare between Roco and Lariette. Ark wasn’t stupid. At the time he had been puzzled, but he understood the situation after the alcohol wore off. It was caused by Roco’s misunderstanding.

‘That Roco, what were you thinking.....?’

Ark mistakenly thought that Alan was Lariette’s boyfriend. Although it would be difficult to understand when looking through Ark’s eyes, no men would look at it objectively. No, these days Ark unexpectedly thought of Alan as a decent guy. He never asked directly but Ark was under the impression that Alan was Lariette’s boyfriend. Naturally Lariette would have a handsome boyfriend with lots of money. Why would she be interested in Ark? Roco hadn’t known the situation and unreservedly exposed her jealousy. But Ark was really puzzled by the situation that unfolded from her jealousy. Just thinking about that incident caused his face to become hot.

‘I should avoid Roco and Lariette-nim for the moment.’

He didn’t have the courage to face them.

“Uhh, I don’t like it.”

Then Racard’s voice was heard from Ark’s shoulder.

“Huh? What?”

“I don’t like seeing that pig’s face. That stupid pig!”

Racard stared at Buksil and murmured with dissatisfaction. Buksil turned his head and smirked at Racard. The reason Buksil was making that expression was because of his pet dog, Baekgu.

‘It is an really surprising combination.’

In fact, Buksil had initially disliked it when Baekgu was made into his pet dog. Having a dog two times bigger than him? Even if he was tamed by violence, that was only relevant to Ark. He might’ve sworn an oath of obedience to Buksil but it wasn’t enforceable. Buksil wasn’t assured by Ark’s words. No, it was a wolf and a pig. He was lucky if the wolf didn’t eat him. However, Ark had a very strong reason for making Buksil Baekgu’s owner.

'Now they I've fulfilled his current wish for a subordinate, he won't ask for another one in the future. I can also reduce the money spent by 50% after giving Baekgu to Buksil.

Although they were travelling together again, Ark and Buksil's relationship was different than before. Even though Ark had previously been unpleasant to Buksil, this time it was necessary that he hire Buksil. It could be said that Buksil had been promoted from a slave to a free person. As the exclusive cameraman, Buksil had made a request.

"I won't do any labour."

"What does that mean? I'm giving you a monthly salary."

"Yes, obviously I would film the video if I receive a monthly salary. But I refuse to do any other type of labour. You'll have to pay me the same amount if you want other types of labour."

Buksil's request was natural in a capitalistic society. Of course, Ark was angry about paying for a position he normally got for free but he had no choice. He could threaten him but he had no way of knowing if it would keep working. At the end of their negotiations, Ark and Buksil managed to agree on a reasonably price for Buksil's work in gathering ingredients. Ark agreed to pay him 1~5 silvers within the normal asking price of the store for the ingredients after 30 days. That was an expense of approximately 1 gold per day in Ark's budget. Of course he had to pay for the labour, but thinking about buying the ingredients that he previously got for free made him upset. But the ingredients that Buksil gathered were necessary. Ark had to feed Buksil, Racard and Radun who needed an enormous amount of food after transforming. Thanks to that, it was easy to start lacking ingredients. When that happened, Ark's travel speed would decrease by half.

'Isn't there a method in which I can save money?'

Then Ark subsequently made Baekgu Buksil's pet dog.

"If you're my employee then why do I have to feed your pet for free?"

That was the reason why Ark put Buksil in charge of the expenses for Baekgu's meals. The situation had completely reversed. Ark charged 50 silver per day for Baekgu's regular three meals. In other words, Buksil ended up only receiving 50 silver for gathering the ingredients. The meal expenses matched the price of Ark buying the ingredients.

"I was tricked again. Damn, this is a lump not a pet dog!"

It was natural that Buksil thought like that. But after travelling with Ark, Buksil's thoughts changed by 180 degrees. In fact, Buksil had been most worried about whether Baekgu would listen to him. Unlike his worries, Baekgu obediently followed Buksil's commands. He thought that Buksil was better than Ark who would randomly hit him. In addition, Baekgu was quite useful. As a Wolrang he had some degree of fighting ability so he could be used as Buksil's bodyguard during fights. In addition, his keen sense of smell helped find ingredients. So even with Baekgu's meal expenses settled, they found so many ingredients that they could receive 1 gold for it. But it was the riding function that was Buksil's favourite. Just like Radun, Baekgu could be used as a mount.

Pa pa pa pat, pa pa pa pat!

Now Buksil could ride Baekgu instead of Radun. Ark hadn't expected it but having Baekgu as another mount was good. Thanks to Radun not having to carry Buksil, their travel speed became 30% faster.

'The result of entrusting Baekgu to Buksil is quite good.....'

'That's strange? Buksil is a nice fellow? Why does anger well up whenever I see his face?'

Racard tilted his head like he couldn't understand. He agreed. In fact, Ark also didn't like it. He couldn't understand why but it felt like Ark would be disadvantaged when Buksil was happy.

"What are you doing right now?"

Ark asked with uncomfortable eyes. Then Buksil laughed and raised the memory crystal.

"Huhuhu, do you want to see?"

"The memory crystal? Is there something unusual about it?"

"Nothing like that. Just take a look at it."

Buksil activated the memory crystal and played the footage that was stored. The scene showed when they were riding the dolphins.

"What is this?"

"Just wait and see. Oh, it starts now."

Ark turned his head at Buksil's words but there was no special change. What was he meant to see? Ark made an uncertain expression until he noticed something strange. It wasn't necessary to say again, but Buksil took the video using the magic projector. Of course, most of the footage was taken from behind Ark. But this video was different. There were also situations where the scene was filmed from in front, behind or on his left and right.

"How is it? Doesn't it feel completely different?"

"What on earth is going on? You were behind me when riding the dolphins."

"I applied the Vampire's Eye."

"Vampire's Eye?"

"It is the skill I learnt after Karakul sucked my blood."

Of course Ark also knew that. It was a skill which could use the eyeball to scout the area.

"I don't understand what it has to do with filming the video?"

"I thought it was a skill that might be useful so I've been testing its various uses. Then I accidently found a new use for it."

"New use?"

"This is it."

When Buksil smiled and tapped the back of his head, one eyeball popped out. No matter how many times he saw it, it really was an uncomfortable scene. However, Buksil was already accustomed to it so it wasn't strange for him anymore. Then he took out a memory crystal the size of a finger and inserted it into the back of the eyeball.

"Ugh, that was slightly painful. Anyway, now the eyeball will act like a magic projector and anything it sees will be preserved in the memory crystal. Huhuhu, isn't it awesome?"

It was amazing. The idea of embedding the memory crystals on the eyeball was really great. Thanks to the Vampire's Eye, the video filming ability was really amazing. Buksil popped out his remaining eyeball and embedded it with a crystal. Then the two eyeballs with crystals in them circled around Ark. When the eyeballs

were collected and the video played, the scene which showed looked like it had been filmed from a helicopter.

“So I can also edit the scenes taken earlier. Not only that. I can use the eyeballs to film battle situations taking place somewhere else at the same time to give a sense of urgency.”

“But how can you see when your eyes are removed?”

“The magic projector.”

Buksil laughed and took out the magic projector. Then he extracted the plug and inserted it into the back of his head.

“This allows me to see all the scenes shot.”

With the magic projector attached to him, Buksil laughed as he spoke. The eyeballs floating on either side of him also seemed to laugh. However, Ark didn't feel like laughing. Not a cyborg.....little by little he was becoming a strange monster.

“It is wonderful.”

“Isn't it? Isn't it? Having my blood sucked turned out to be a benefit.”

Baekgu snorted at Buksil's exclamation.

“Huhuhu, this will revolutionize game videos. The broadcasting stations will drool over this.”

That was the reason for Buksil's excessive excitement. Buksil had already earned a good amount of money from selling the rights to a game video. Although it was eventually discovered by Ark and they made a contract for him to receive 50% of the video income from now on.

“Now the possibility of an exclusive contract with the broadcasting station isn't a dream. Ark-nim, please show me some good situations.”

Buksil did a thumbs up and laughed. Buksil had been forcibly compelled to become Ark's exclusive cameraman and he had been seriously worried about his future in Dark Earth. He had contemplated if he should continue travelling with Ark in New World. But after thinking about it, he realised that it wasn't so bad to stay with Ark. Anyway, he had raised his level quite a lot by conducting the sales for the items Ark sold. And he now received money for the ingredients he gathered and a pet that he normally would've never received.

‘Plus.....’

In fact, Buksil had a simple dream. It was to become the cameraman of a broadcasting station..... That was why Buksil had been carrying around an expensive magic projector which he used to shoot videos of Ark. And he was one step closer to his dream after seeing his video appear on the TV.

‘The broadcasting station is interested in videos of Ark. If I become his exclusive cameraman then my videos can appear on TV again.’

In addition, he would receive 50% of all fees. It was an opportunity to earn money and accomplish his dreams! Although it was sometimes an unfair and regretful experience, Buksil was also a little thankful to Ark. Thanks to that idea, Buksil changed his mind and started to earnestly fulfil his obligations. But no matter how happy the pig was, the scene with the missing eyeballs still seemed like something from a horror movie.

‘The person appears satisfied by himself.....’

Ark scratched his head and clicked his tongue. If the videos sold well then Ark also received something, so it was good. But why? Seeing extracted eyeballs with crystals embedded and a magic projector attached to the head of a pig like a cyborg made his eyes water. Racard looked at it with upset eyes and muttered.

“Master.....I can’t stand looking at that guy.”

“Yes.....”

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-You have entered the Land of the Dead.

<Explorer’s Knowledge: Hidden area discovery bonus (Skill Points: 10)>

You have entered a special area and the environmental effect is applied.

<Natural resilience -50%, Fatigue increases 20% faster. If fatigue reaches 70%, you will be afflicted with ‘loss of motivation to live’ and your attack, defense and movement speed will be decreased by 50%. This will be cancelled when fatigue is relieved>

“This is the undead territory?”

Ark confirmed the information window as he looked at the expanse of swamp stretched out in front of him. If it was the Land of the Dead then it should be infested with undead. There was still a considerable distance to travel before he reached the City of the Dead. Perhaps the undead only infested the city and not the areas surrounding it.

“Well, I don’t have to worry about the special area environmental effect.”

In New World, special environmental effects were applied depending on the region. The first time he experienced it was the ‘cold wave’ effect when he entered the snowy mountains of Seutandal. Then there was the ‘heat wave’ effect that was previously applied in the lava cave. However, it wasn’t simply a penalty. Although Dark Blood would apply enormous penalties to general users, it was actually a bonus to Ark. If he explained it more deeply, the impact of environmental effects could be divided into two types.

First, it was based on attributes or skills. For example if someone with a ice attribute or a user who learnt ice magic was in the snowy mountains, their attack power or magic would become stronger. On the other hand, that skill or magic wouldn’t be able to exert its full power in an area with a ‘heat wave.’

And the second type was based on species. In a dense forest, general characters might have a bonus of ‘natural resilience increased by 20%’ but the forest elves would receive an effect like having their magic increased by 30%. On the other hand, dwarves would receive bonuses in underground areas such as dungeons. In the past, the rehabilitation members had spent several months in the underground labyrinth and received penalties such as ‘depression.’ If a dwarf like Buksil had spent that time in the underground labyrinth, they would receive a bonus instead. Thus the combat power of a user would change depending on the area they were in. That was the reason why Ark chose a human when he first started. Generally, humans weren’t significantly affected by environmental changes. Humans might receive a bonus depending on the area but there was no significant penalty applied. They weren’t particularly resistant or vulnerable to certain states. So it was possible for stable play. Of course, there were also areas where the environmental effect had nothing to do with species such as the Land of the Dead.

“This standard is nothing to worry about but.....”

Natural resilience affected the rate at which his health recovers without the use of potions or magic. The 50% reduction was impractical but nothing to worry about since he could use food at the end of each battle for recovery. The same thing applied for fatigue. He actually had a separate worry.

“Baekgu, you stepped on some poo.”

“Eh? Uh, where? Ugh!”

Baekgu let out a cry of distress and retreated at Ark’s words. Then his foot entered the swamp and his health quickly decreased.

‘As I guessed.’

Ark grinned and nodded. In fact, Ark had been to a similar area before. It was a black swamp surrounded by dead trees with a nasty smell coming from it. In an area like this, the thing he had to pay the most attention to wasn’t monsters but the swamp. If he fell into the swamp then he would instantly be affected by deadly poison.

“Ah, I’m sorry. I thought it was poo but it was actually just mud.”

“Ah, Ark-nim! Heok, B-Baekgu.....! What are you doing? Detoxify him quickly!”

“Don’t you know? A herbal antidote costs 70 silver.”

Ark held the antidote and laughed.

“Damn, give it to me!”

Buksil snatched the potion and poured it over Baekgu. Thankfully, Baekgu was cured of the poison and he stared tearfully at Ark.

“Huk huk, I’m alive. Phew, Master-nim.

“Yes yes. I know, I know.”

“As expected, I only have one Master.”

The friendship between the wolf and the pig was deepening every day thanks to Ark. Anyway, Ark was able to determine that the swamp was poisonous from that small incident. However, the entire area wasn’t covered by swamp. There were fields between the swamp that three or four people could navigate through.

“But the path through the swamp is too complicated. If there are no monsters then I should ride on Radun.’

It was natural since Radun had a high immunity for poison. Buksil could also ride Baekgu so it wasn’t a problem. Although he had no tolerance against poison, he could jump dozens of metres. Therefore the length of the swamp wouldn’t be a problem. No, it was actually faster than riding Radun. How long had passed since

entering the swamp? Then Baekgu who was ahead of him stopped moving and twitched his nose.

“Baekgu, what is it?”

“No, I smell rotting corpses all of a sudden.”

“Rotting corpses?”

Ark looked around the area warily. This was the Land of the Dead. If there was the smell of rotting corpses then wouldn't there be undead monsters nearby? Indeed, they were already deep into the swamp. It would be around this time that any monsters would appear. However, Racard who had been scouting returned and shook his head.

“I went and looked but I can't see anything.”

‘Hmm, then the monster is not visible. Once Baekgu reacted to it.....’

Ark was thinking that when something interrupted him.

Ssak? Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

All of a sudden Radun screamed and fell into the swamp. Ark instinctively jumped off Radun and landed on the ground. He was able to grasp the situation after turning around. A rotten arm sticking out of the swamp had pulled Radun's leg.

‘The monsters were hiding in the swamp?’

“Radun, release transformation! Dark Blade!”

Ark swung his sword and cut off the arm that was holding onto Radun. Meanwhile, Radun returned to his snake form and slipped around Ark's waist. However, Radun was barely able to sigh with relief before Racard screamed.

“M-master, the swamp.....!”

Ark's face stiffened as he turned his head.

Bugul bugul, bugul, bugul.

It wasn't just one area. All around the swamp, bubbles started appearing and some dark forms started rising one after the other. The stench of rotten flesh travelled over the distance as the shapes revealed the exposed bones, with maggots and leeches attached to their remaining skin. It was like the disgusting sight of food left to rot for three years! However, Ark wasn't horrified by the monsters.

“Oh my god, this is.....!”

The number of monsters that rose from the swamp was 100! Using Eyes of the Cat, he confirmed that the name of the monsters was Mould Zombie and they were level 300.

“Damn, how am I supposed to fight 100 of them in such an inconvenient terrain?”

But the situation wouldn't improve if he complained. He had to fight if monsters appeared. No, it was impossible not to fight.

Kuaaaa!

It was the amazing sight of Mould Zombies heading towards him. Ark quickly attacked using Dark Blade. But once the battle started, he realized the Mould Zombies weren't as strong as he thought. They were level 300 so why did their health decrease by 10% every time he attacked them?

“What the? These guys are weak compared to their level?”

Ark thought about it and realized the reason why.

“That's right, my dark attribute bonus is now 50%!”

Thanks to the Moon Piece, his Gift of Darkness had upgraded! The effect increased all his stats by 50%. After completing the <Wolrang's Revenge> quest, Ark's current level was 325. With the 50% bonus applied, his current level was 487. Of course the level 300 Mould Zombies wouldn't be a match.

“Okay, then the zombies' large numbers won't be a problem!”

He was now overflowing with confidence after realizing the situation. In addition, zombies were weak compared to other monsters. It was difficult for thoughts to process in their brain. So unlike other monsters, zombies just used their superior numbers for straightforward attacks. In addition, the movement their movement was slow so he wouldn't be hit even if he was careless.

“Hahaha, these guys are so slow, catch them!”

Racard was puzzled at first but quickly grasped the situation and become lively. Slow moving monsters were the easiest for Racard to deal with since he could fly in the sky. The reason users avoided zombies was because of their terrible appearance. However, Ark had seen movies about a murderer eating minced raw flesh so his nerves was stronger than that. The zombies weren't a problem.

"Okay, let's sweep them all up. Dark blade!"

Ark blindly used the skill and rampaged among the zombies. However, there was something Ark had failed to notice. There was a reason the zombies in the swamp were called Mould Zombies.....Ark only realized the meaning when one was defeated. When the Mould Zombie died, its stomach started swelling up before suddenly exploding. The maggots and leeches attached to the rotten flesh of the Mould Zombie flew towards Ark.

"Sheesh, I feel dirty.....Spirit of the Cat!"

Ark shouted and the form of a huge cat appeared above his head. The maggots and leeches collapsed after hearing the piercing scream. It wasn't just the ones on Ark. It was an advanced skill so all the leeches attached to the zombies that were in range collapsed. But it wasn't the leeches who only sucked 1~2 health that Ark had to pay attention to. He wasn't aware of it thanks to the maggots and leeches. When the Mould Zombie had exploded, a grey powder had scattered in every direction.

-The 'White Mould' of the Mould Zombies has encroached into the interior of your body.

<You will be affected by the abnormal state of the mould for 10 minutes>

"Huk, what is this?"

A baffling message had surfaced in front of Ark. Why was it suddenly a situation where he couldn't touch the Mould Zombies?

"What on earth is going on?" Skill Penetration!"

Ark used 'Skill Penetration' with a puzzled expression. It was an extra effect that he received when Eyes of the Cat advanced to the Master level.

-Eyes of the Cat (Master, Active): You have observed numerous enemies using the eye technique.

Thanks to the accumulated experience, you can know more information about your opponent. In addition, you can use your sharp intuition to figure out the opponent's skills. Thanks to the bonus of reaching the Master rank, you can see details of the opponent's skills.

<For 10 minutes + Night Vision, + Life Detection, + Weak Point Discovery, + Double Critical Chance. Mana consumption: 100>

**Skill Penetration:** You can confirm the details of the skill the opponent used. If you use it continuously then you can also determine the timing of the skills. Once activated, it will consume 5 mana every 10 seconds until cancelled or mana runs out.

In the past, he had no problems without this effect. In low level areas, the skills of a monster or chaotic player was obvious so he had no need to check the information window. However, high-level monsters would often use strange or unique skills. In that case, Skill Penetration was an extremely useful skill as it allowed him to figure out the information quickly. Once he used Skill Penetration, it instantly showed him information about the mould.

-Mould Zombie racial skill: Mould spore scattering.

There are various parasitic moulds present in the interior of the Mould Zombie. When the host is injured, the parasitic mould will escape from the interior and propagate outside. Of course, the mould would also escape to the outside when the Mould Zombie dies. The mould spores have several different colours and can have different deadly poisons. If something living breathes in the spores then it would be a dangerous situation.

【 White Mould 】 The Mould with the weakest toxins. It will increase symptoms of 'hallucinations' for 10 minutes.

【 Green mould 】 A mould you should pay attention to. It will increase 'numbness' for 10 minutes.

【 Purple Mould 】 A lethal mould. It will give the symptoms of a 'zombie.' The moment it is inhaled, the flesh will rot and you will die.

\* It is impossible to treat using the common remedy treatments

'What is this? Mould spores? Damn, the mould zombies have parasitic fungi? They raise the mould inside their bodies? Then just breathing it in would cause an abnormal state? How can I avoid it? Isn't it like I have a 100% change of dying if I inhale the mould? W-wait? Didn't I breathe in the grey mould before? Isn't grey mould hallucinations? But nothing seems to have changed.....?'

"Master, what are you doing? Back, back!"

Then Racard shouted from behind him. Ark instinctively halted his sword movement.

"Eh? Lariette-nim, how.....?"

Surprisingly, it was Lariette smiling behind him.

“What are you saying Master? Are you blind? Steady yourself!”

“What?”

Kuaaaa!

Ark asked with a befuddled look. Then Lariette winked, ran up to Ark and bit his throat. It was a critical hit and his health drained away. Ark gasped with surprise and pushed Lariette away.

“T-this is.....heok! JusticeMan ajusshi, rehabilitation hyung-nims, Shambala.....!”

It wasn’t just them. All the users and NPCs become acquainted with while playing the game appeared. After seeing their forms, Ark realized that he had been caught in an abnormal state.

“This is the hallucinations?”

Ark looked around with a stunned expression.

It was an absurd technique. Of course, the hallucinations weren’t a big problem for Ark now that he noticed. It might’ve been a serious problem if Ark was in a party, but he was fighting alone. Therefore the only presences that approached him were those trying to kill him. But among the three mould types, there was one that would rot his flesh and cause death. If he inhaled it then it was a 100% fatal poison. Then Lariette’s body which he injured a while ago swelled up and exploded. Ark rushed to cover his mouth but it was too late.

-The ‘Green Mould’ of the Mould Zombies has encroached into the interior of your body.

<You will be affected by the abnormal state of the mould for 10 minutes>

It wasn’t necessary to search for more information about this state. His body trembled and wouldn’t move properly.

‘Damn, I made a mistake. If I get affected every time I kill one then how will I keep 100 of them? I should retreat for now.’

“Buksil, Baekgu, retreat! Escape outside the swamp!”

“Hik, understood. Baekgu, let’s go!”

Buksil instinctively perceived that the situation was serious and hurriedly exclaimed. Baekgu could jump several metres with one breath and escape to the swamp outside. However, they were already surrounded by 100 Mould Zombies so it wasn't easy to escape. Just as Baekgu was jumping, one of the Mould Zombie jumped and grabbed his leg. This caused Buksil to fall off.

"Ack, M-master!"

"Aaaaak, Baekgu, Ark-nim, help me!"

Buksil fell into the swamp and turned pale as he was immediately poisoned. The panicked Buksil was like a gift for the Mould Zombies who converged on him. But Buksil was already halfway to being a corpse after being trapped at the vampire's estate. Buksil frantically jumped out of the swamp and ran around randomly. Baekgu followed after Buksil and muttered.

"M-master, please hold still for a bit.....!"

"Ack, I don't know, I don't know! Just help me!"

'Dammit, Buksil will revive if he dies but Baekgu won't.....'

Although Baekgu was a pet dog, he wasn't a summon. He was a regular NPC who would stay dead if he died. But there was no way for Ark to help. He was still under the effects of 'Hallucinations' so he couldn't even tell Buksil apart from the Mould Zombies. It would be different if he hadn't caught the 'hallucinations.' Honestly, Ark wasn't even sure if he could shake off the 100 Mould Zombies to escape.

"Huck, red mould!"

One of the Mould Zombies Ark attacked died and scattered red spores. He was screwed if he inhaled it! Ark quickly tried to withdraw from it. He was so surprised by the red mould that he stepped into the swamp and the Mould Zombies swarmed. Ark hurriedly left the swamp and drank the antidote but his health had already dropped from 70% to 40%.

'There's no choice. I'll have to leave Buksil with Baekgu and try to survive myself!'

"Riposte!"

Ark pushed back the Mould Zombies with Riposte and ran. Since they scattered the mould spores every time they died, it was best to use Riposte to push the zombies back. But it wasn't easy while Ark was still affected by 'Numbness.' He felt terrible every time he moved his body. It felt heavy every time he used his skills. Ark

couldn't even move 100 metres before he was surrounded by the Mould Zombies again.

'Damn, it can't be helped. I have to reduce the number of zombies somehow!'

"Racard, return to my side and use Blood Lane!"

"Ah, yes. Blood Lane!"

At that moment, Racard's eyes turned red and blood gushed out from his mouth. It flowed up and covered a range of 10 metres like a rain shower. It was the descent of the cursed blood which caused a large number of abnormal states!

"That's it, now I've got you guys.....eh?"

Ark was delighted but then his eyes suddenly widened. Why was an 'immune' message flashing over all the Mould Zombies when he confirmed it with Eyes of the Cat? Ark swore after confirming the information.

'Ah damn.....I was too careless!'

Blood Lane was a skill which caused abnormal states associated with the mind. But the opponents were zombies. They were also filled with mould. It was impossible for a mental attack to affect them. The use of 'Blood Lane' put Ark into an even more serious situation.

"Oooooo, I'm dizzy. B-b....I need blood."

The penalty of using Blood Lane was that his movements and abilities would fall by 50% until Racard recovered the blood. Therefore Racard couldn't fly and collapsed on the ground. Then a mould zombie grabbed Racard. Then Racard drooled while looking at the hand and bit it.

"Oh, b-blood....!"

However, Racard only rejoiced for a moment before falling to the ground with nausea.

"Eh? Eww, disgusting! That damn blood has passed its expiration date!"

Naturally the blood of an undead wouldn't be fresh.

"What are you doing in this situation? Just eat you useless bat!"

"What did you say? Master was the one who told me to use Blood Lane...ouch!"

Racard had been stepped on by a zombie. Despite his evolution, the Mould Zombies were still 50 levels higher than Racard. In addition, his stats had fallen by 50% and he couldn't fly so he was no match for the zombies. The Mould Zombies firmly stepped on Racard and he quickly fell into a critical condition.

"Why aren't you different even after evolving? Riposte!"

Ark pushed the zombies back with Riposte and picked up Racard. The situation was still serious even after rescuing Racard.

'Damn, what now? There is still a long distance before I can escape outside the swamp and I can't even move 100 metres.....using Sprint in the swamp is also difficult..... However, I can't fight earnestly against the Mould Zombies.....'

It would be dangerous if he was affected by the White Mould or Green Mould again. And the Red Mould guaranteed a 100% chance of death. Then he suddenly heard Buksil's voice out of nowhere.

"Ark-nim, this way!"

He turned around and saw that Buksil and Baekgu were jumping around and shouting in a cemetery. In fact, tombstones had sometimes appeared in the swamp. Most of those tombstones were on the plains, not the swamp. The place where Buksil had fled to was a place with tombstones gathered. But the atmosphere of the tombstone that Buksil was standing next to was slightly odd. It was three or four times larger than the other tombstones and a pale light was surrounding it. The most surprising part was the Mould Zombies who chased after Buksil and Baekgu couldn't enter the area and were just circling it.

"What's going on?"

"I'm not sure either. I accidentally ran to this place and then the zombies couldn't enter."

'A safe zone inside the swamp?'

He didn't know the reason but it was fortunate that Buksil had found the place. He only had 200 health left. In this situation, it was impossible to avoid the Mould Zombies in order to escape the swamp. On the other hand, the tombstones were only 100 metres away.

'The problem is how to get there.....'

It wasn't that easy to reach the tombstone. The swamp filled with poison was between Ark and the tombstone. Although there were stepping stones in the middle that he could use to move through the swamp, the dozens of Mould Zombies made a wall blocking him.

'I only have 200 health left so if I fall into the swamp and become poisoned then it'll be dangerous. In addition, I have to avoid the attacks of the Mould Zombies. But there is no room to go back.'

Ark pushed the zombies surrounding him back with Riposte and clenched his teeth tightly.

"Okay, this is an risky venture. Moon light shadow!"

A ring of blue light scanned Ark's body up and down after he used the skill. Then the ring of light warped like pasta dough and changed into a person. Ark's body had been scanned and a replica produced. Then the Mould Zombies suddenly flocked to the copy of Ark.

"Oh, is has quite a nice effect?"

Ark instantly made two more dummies and ran to the stepping stones. Most of the zombies had gathered around the dummies so only a few were blocking him. Ark pushed them back using Riposte and jumped across the stepping stones. Then one of the dummies which was being attacked couldn't endure anymore and disappeared in a flash of light.

Grrrrrrr? Grrrrrrr!

The Mould Zombies shrieked as they realized they had been deceived and rushed towards Ark.

'Damn, it was faster than I expected!'

Ark quickly jumped along the stepping stones.

"Ark-nim, hurry, hurry!"

"I know. Calm down and stop shouting wildy! That's it, I'm almost there.....huk!"

Ark only had a few stepping stones left. However, 10 Mould Zombies suddenly jumped into the swamp in front of him. That wasn't all. The Mould Zombies pursuing him from behind was rapidly closing the distance.

“Dammit, there’s no point dying here. If this happens then I must rely on a plan of desperation!”

Ark threw his body and shouted.

“Jump!”

It was the ‘Jump’ skill attached to his item Wolf’s Feet! Ark had only intended to use Jump to leap over the zombies. But was it because he made a mistake with the weight distribution the moment he jumped? When he used the skill, his thigh muscles momentarily swelled and he shot forward like a cannon. At the same time the 10 zombies quickly surged forward. Ark reflexively swung his sword.

Pepepepeng!

Something unthinkable occurred. The addition of his enormous speed increased his attack power tremendously and a few of the zombies were sent flying. Thus Ark managed to cross the swamp and arrived at the tombstone.

“Whoa! B-brilliant!”

Buksil’s mouth dropped as he exclaimed excitedly. However, Ark was even more surprised than Buksil.

‘What, what the? This is no joke. I thought it could only be used to jump, but it could be used in such a method? No, now’s not the time.’

Ark turned his body and confirmed the Mould Zombies had followed.

‘They really can’t come here. The distance of that light is approximately a 10 metre radius? But why is this tombstone different?’

After verifying his safety, Ark examined the tombstone. Although it was bigger in size, he couldn’t see anything different between this tombstone and the others. But Ark could guess the reason after reading the writing on the tombstone.

*-The saint ‘Betelgeuse’ lies here.*

“A saint? Then the zombies can’t approach because of the power of the saint who lies here?”

But why was there a saint’s tombstone at all? He had those types of doubts but now wasn’t the time to think about it.

‘Although the crisis is resolved for the moment, the situation still isn’t good.’

They could rest and recover for the moment thanks to the tombstone's power. However, Ark and Buksil were still surrounded by 100 Mould Zombies. Although previously they had been slightly scattered, now the Mould Zombies had completely surrounded the tombstone where Ark and Buksil were resting.

'I have to look for a way to escape while my health recovers.....'

He couldn't stay here forever. Ark's destination was the City of the Dead which was just beyond the swamp.

'I'll have to experience this situation many more times while crossing the swamp.....'

If his opponent was an ordinary zombie then he could somehow deal with the unfavourable terrain. However, he had to find some method to take care of the spore attacks from the Mould Zombies.

'If I'm affected by hallucinations again then I can just close my eyes and use 'Mind's Eye.' Although the 'Numbness' is troublesome, I can somehow handle it if I stay near the tombstone.'

The problem was the red mould. Before he escaped just then, one of the zombies he knocked down had scattered a red mould. It was fortunate that the zombie had been blown away thanks to Riposte, but it would be impossible to avoid being poisoned if it happened right in front of him. And the result was a 100% chance of death.

'Although it is okay while I'm near the tombstone, I need some countermeasures if I want to move ahead through the swamp. But it can't be recovered using a general remedy.....'

Ark sighed before he had a sudden flash of an idea.

'Wait? Do I have to use a general remedy? What did the information window say again?'

It couldn't be recovered using general remedies. In other words, he could treat it using special remedies. And what was a special remedy? Ark considered with a smile before getting up.

"Hah, why didn't I think of that before?"

## **Act 5: Along the Path of Stars**

[TL Notes: In the last chapter, there was an information window which was about the colours of the moulds. The last colour was purple in the raw but that was the only time it was mentioned so I thought it was a mistake by the author and changed it to red. However, purple is mentioned in the chapter but it is a little confusing because it seems to be the same as the red mould. So I've changed information in the previous chapter to purple and just kinda thought of red and purple moulds as the same thing]

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"Bang, bang!"

Awooo, Awoooo! Buksil and Baekgu jumped around while yelling.

"Noisy, please do it quietly. Dark Blade!"

"But we're bored because there is nothing to do."

"Bored? You dare say such a thing in front of me? Riposte!"

Ark rotated his sword and pushed back 10 Mould Zombies.

"Ark-nim, the Mould Zombie on that side is about to explode!"

Buksil exclaimed while filming the battle with the eyeball. When he turned around, the Mould Zombie who had lost all its health was swelling up like a balloon. The Mould Zombie was about to use its worse attack, Spore Scattering. Ark had been having a hard time against the Mould Zombies because of this attack. In fact, the slow moving zombies weren't a big threat to Ark. However, he became defenceless while avoiding the spore attacks. The location was also in a poisonous swamp. The places where he could run away were limited. If he tried to avoid the mould attacked then he would be attacked by the other Mould Zombies.

'However, having my health decreased is better than being poisoned by the mould.'

If he was affected by the mould's abnormal states then the situation would become even worse. Furthermore, the zombie that was swelling up had a red aura around it. The red mould was the most dangerous one. Once inhaled, the poison would give him the symptoms of a 'zombie' and there was a 100% chance that he would die. However, now Ark just smiled.

'Before I would do everything to avoid it, even if I had to plunge into the swamp.'

Pepepepeng!

The Mould Zombie finally exploded and red powder was scattered everywhere. Then the message window that appeared in front of him wasn't red which indicated a crisis, but was instead blue.

-The 'Red Mould' of the Mould Zombies has encroached into the interior of your body.

However, the toxin has died thanks to the powerful immune components before it could spread.

"Hahaha! Look at this you damn zombies! This is the power of medicine!"

Ark gave an elated laugh and looked at the Mould Zombies. Yes, this was what Ark had spent the last couple of days and nights studying! Although he had managed to protect himself thanks to the saint's tombstone, Ark had been in a gloomy mood. He hadn't figured out a way to deal with the spore attack. Fortunately, the saint's tombstone was a safety zone so he would somehow be able to handle the Mould Zombies. However, Ark's purpose wasn't hunting. It was to reach the City of the Dead through the swamp.

'I can't be driven into such a situation again in a place with no safe zones.'

No, it was still dangerous even with the safe zone. If it was other moulds then he could avoid it using the saint's tombstone. But it was the end if he was poisoned by the red mould.

'It doesn't depend on level or ability. If my stamina and mental strength is high, my resistance to the other states would increase. But that doesn't matter if I'm affected by the red mould. Even if I manage to get away from here, if the mould is found elsewhere then there is no way I can pass. But the mould can't be cured using general treatment pills the way a common illness or poison can.....'

Ark was contemplating this when he recalled a similar situation. An illness which general remedies and even Holy magic couldn't cure! Yes, he remembered the Galgin clan who received mass food poisoning in the Forest of Life and had been on the verge of death. And hadn't Ark been the one to settle the problem?

'Can I possibly solve it like that incident?'

Even poisonous pills were legal depending on the way it was used. Thus couldn't even dog poo be used as medicine? Oh, was that a bit different? Anyway, Ark had learned the method to cure the Galgin's food poisoning. Thanks to his <Food Worshipper>, he was able to determine the hidden effects of ingredients. So Ark then began his earnest study of moulds.

‘There are many experimental ingredients around.’

Ark started to hunt the Mould Zombies close to the tombstones. At this point, Ark still didn’t know what kind of mould would appear after the zombie exploded. Whether it was grey, white or red, Ark took measures to ensure his safety. After reducing the zombie’s health to 90%, Ark would withdraw and finish them off with arrows. Of course, The Mould Zombies couldn’t approach the tombstone so the safest way would be to just shoot arrows at them. However, Ark was still a beginner in archery. It would take forever to kill a level 300 monster. In addition, the arrows were for emergencies so he didn’t carry a lot around with him. But he got what he needed.

#### -Brown Mould Spores Pocket (Poisonous Herb)

The only place where the mould is able to propagate. Usually in dead animals or the undead, the parasites would develop within the thin pockets. If the pocket receives an impact when the undead dies then it would break and the spores would scatter. Mould spores are extremely dangerous to living things, but the mould would die very quickly without pockets like these.

\* Advanced Ingredient Identification Additional Information: A processing method can extract ingredients with immunity against the moulds.

‘As expected!’

Ark’s eyes lit up at the sight of the information window. Thanks to his advanced ingredient identification, he knew there was a possibility of creating a treatment against the moulds. So Ark spent one day finding the Mould Spore Pockets. In the past, he had used various methods of extracting ingredients to create the treatment for the Galgin. However, medicine wasn’t that superficial.

“Let’s try drying it.....ugh!”

The spore pocket was similar to a directionless germ weapon. If he touched it or dropped it onto the ground a little bit too hard then it would explode! So Ark had to kill countless numbers of Mould Zombies over and over. Ark used trial and error and gradually figured out the method of dealing with the spore pockets.

‘Hmm, the spore pockets won’t explode when soaked in water. They are dangerous ingredients so I should soak everything and keep it in water for the moment.’

Ark experimented on the spore pockets using various methods and recorded everything meticulously. But his mould research ran into a wall on his 2nd day. He had tried steaming, boiling, drying, soaking and other methods but he still couldn’t

extract the required material. Ark felt the same feeling of frustration as scientists who failed in their research.

“Surely they has to be a way to create a medicine against moulds?”

It happened when Ark was engulfed with disappointment and despair. A lot of amazing discoveries in science or medicine were found by coincidence. Nitro-glycerine was accidentally stabilized when the boat shook and a researcher created dynamite by accidentally mixing together a few chemicals. The miracle that occurred was also a similar coincidence.

“Yawn, can you really make a remedy? The methods you’re trying.....eh?”

Buksil had been yawning because he stayed up all night as the assistance but he suddenly became startled. While in a half asleep state, he had mixed different experimental ingredients together.

“What are you doing? Don’t you know we only have a few left?”

“I’m sorry. I.....”

“Eh? Wait, bring that over here.”

Ark checked the bottle that Buksil was holding in his hands and felt a sudden flash. The mixed liquid that Buksil prepared had dissolved the white and purple mould. But when the two liquids mixed together, the purple lightened and became indigo. Well, it was obvious when considering the normal colour associations. The problem was that the toxic element also changed colour.

‘There is also the method of mixing the moulds to change their nature!’

The accident had showed Ark other areas of study. Thus Ark concentrated on mixing the liquidized moulds.

‘Oh my god, it is so easy to separate them.....’

He spent so long searching for answers and it was right in front of his eyes. In fact, the answer was there when he saw the information window for the first time. He could make a final colour using purple, green and white. Mixing purple and white was indigo, green and white was teal and mixing teal with indigo made blue.....and the colours of immune messages was blue. Yes, the correct answer was blue. When Ark mixed the teal and indigo liquid together, an information window instantly appeared.

-You have made the blue mould disinfectant.

By combining the ingredients and extracting it, you have successfully created something to kill the mould. When this disinfectant is sprayed, you can stop the propagation of mould. If you take the medicine then the mould can't occupy your body for a certain period of time. However, the toxin isn't neutralized so if you take a large dose in a short period of time it can be fatal.

<Immunity to moulds +100% for 1 hour, the medicine can't be taken more than three times a day>

A new information window also appeared after he made the mould disinfectant.

-You have learnt the Food Worshipper's skill 'Knowledge of Poison.'

Knowledge of Poison (Beginner, Passive): In ancient times, the most effective method of curing poison was to use other poison. In addition, the snake's venom is also used as an antidote when bitten by a snake. You have studied the moulds and produced a disinfectant using this knowledge.

<The probability of obtaining a venom pouch from a monster has increased. By refining the poison within the pouch, it is possible to produce an antidote or immunity medicine. The success rate depends on the skill level, and there is a 30% chance of being poisoned if the refining of poison fails>

'A new Food Worshipper skill!'

Ark's mouth dropped at the sight of the information window. In fact, being poisoned was one of the most troublesome things for users like Ark who wandered around without settling down. In New World, there wasn't just one type of poison. The antidotes sold in stores could easily get rid of beginner's venom. But when the poison reaches intermediate or advanced level, users would have to try hundreds of different antidotes depending on the monster or area. That's why most users investigated what poison antidote was needed before they went to a new area. If there were a lot of poisonous monsters in the area then sometimes the users would abandon the new area. Antidotes were relatively cheap, but if they drank it like water than the cost would pile on. The only profession that could solve the problem without wasting a lot of money were thieves. Since they also had poison skills, they obtained an antidote manufacturing skill at the beginning. Although thieves were sometimes unpopular, they were one of the first targets when composing a party. And now Ark could create antidotes thanks to his 'Knowledge of Poisons' skill.

'But it isn't that easy to make antidotes using Knowledge of Poisons.'

The medicines only made him immune to the poison for a certain period of time. He also had to obtain the poison pouches from the monsters so mass production wasn't easy. But wasn't there a chance of turning it into a lucrative business?

After he succeeded in creating the mould disinfectant, the situation went through a 180 degree change. The combat strength of the Mould Zombies was very low compared to their level. There was no reason to be afraid of them without the moulds. No, he was actually rather thankful.

"Ark-nim, another four have appeared behind you!"

When he turned around, he saw that some more Mould Zombies had crawled out from the swamp. He only discovered this later, but a fixed number of Mould Zombies would appear after a certain amount of time passed. If he couldn't deal with them in the time limit then the number of Mould Zombies would increase. They were constantly respawning zombies. Even though it was just like a fearful scene in a zombie movie, Ark only saw the zombies as experience.

"Hmm, they are easy to deal with but it will become more difficult if the numbers keep on increasing. Buksil, how many zombies are there now?"

"50 zombies have appeared this time."

Buksil examined the zombies with his floating eyeballs and replied.

"The number has increased quite a bit. Shall I reduce it?"

Ark avoided the Mould Zombies and shouted.

"Racard, lure them all to one place."

"This way~ this way~ you stupid stiff zombies!"

Racard gathered the Mould Zombies together like a dog herding sheep. Once all the zombies were in one place, Ark held his sword tightly.

"Demonic Opening, Elemental sword fire attribute!"

Gwisal's sword vibrated intensely and flames appeared around it. Ark lifted his sword, leaned his body at an angle and shouted.

"Okay, Jump! Dark blade!"

Ark's inner thigh muscles seemed to expand a few times before he was propelled forwards. Ark literally tore through the zombies as he used Dark Blade. Ark had

developed a new method of dealing with the zombies.

In fact, it would've been better to use Flash when they were all gathered but this place was a swamp. It wasn't the type of terrain that he could carelessly flash around 20 metres. Even if he had an antidote for the poison, the skill would be cancelled if he fell into the swamp. So he came up with combining the skills Jump and Dark Blade. Although it was difficult when he first used Jump, through trial and error he had discovered the correct method. Jump was a skill that would move Ark 10 metres. It was his posture that determined which way the skill would send him. If he lowered his body then he would jump vertically.

Ark expanded on his previous attack of jumping upwards and swinging down. Thanks to the tremendous speed and height, his power increased enormously. And the probability of Drastic Measures also increased by a lot. Once he didn't have to worry about the moulds, Ark swept through the Mould Zombies and experience came pouring out.

"Huhuhu, how is it? This is the 'Adol' technique!"

Thanks to the absurd attack which increased the chance of Drastic Measures, the amount of experience and items he was able to obtain would increase even more! Unfortunately, Jump was a skill attached to an item so he couldn't register it as a chain skill with Drastic Measures. However, the effect was so wonderful that Ark called it 'Adol.' Apart from Flash, it was the birth of his second ranged attack skill. Ark was different from before and wiped out almost all the Mould Zombies. But Ark's attacks had a time limit.

-There is 59 seconds left for the effect of the Mould Disinfectant.

'Sheesh, only this much?'

"Racard, I'll have to clean up the situation. Gather them again."

"Okay. Hey, why are you so stupid? Come over here!"

Racard lured all the Mould Zombies who followed with a stupid expression. Ark used his remaining mana to continuously use 'Adol' and sliced the remaining Mould Zombies to pieces. All the dead bodies exploded and scattered moulds of various colours everywhere, but it seemed more like a congratulatory fireworks of spores. If he killed all the Mould Zombies then more wouldn't respawn for a while.

-Your level has risen.

After killing almost 100 zombies during the 1 hour, he had risen 1 level. Ark returned to the tombstone and confirmed the outcome of his battles.

"Character information window!"

Character Name	Ark	Race	Human
Alignment		Good +450	
Fame	11,725 (+500)	Level	334
Profession		Dark Walker	
Title		Cat Knight, Caretaker of the World Tree, Jackson’s Hero, Great Adventurer, Magic Institute Member, Seutandal’s Hero	
Health	5,255 (+150)	Mana	5,295
Spiritual Power	200	Strength	652 (+28)
Agility	829 (+55)	Stamina	1,002 (+20)
Wisdom	118 (+10)	Intelligence	1,031
Luck	112 (+60)	Flexibility	136
Art of Communication	66	Affection	62 (+10)
Resilience	421		
Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics		153	
* Equipment item effects			
Guardian Armour of the Merpeople: Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified.			
Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10%			
Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10			
*<Animal King> Set effect: Strength + 20, Agility + 20, Stamina +20, Defense +40			
Warrior’s Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 3			
Wolf’s Feet (Shoes): Agility + 40, Movement Speed +40%, Attack Speed +10%, ‘Jump’			

is available

Galgashi's Fur (Mantle): Cold resistance +100%, Agility +20, When health is less than 50%, 'Magic Protection' automatically activates.

Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available

Resurrecting Spirit (Ring): Strength + 5, Mana recovery + 5%

Ark's Ring (Ring): Strength + 5, Agility + 5, Stamina + 5, Wisdom + 5, Intelligence + 5, 'Sudden Increase in Power' available

Amulet of Vitality (Bracelet): Health + 50, Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds

Gladiator's Honour (Bracelet): Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5%

\* All abilities will increase by 50% in the dark

\* You have the ability to hide in the darkness (30 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat)

\* Resistance to Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.

\* You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.

\* Shock absorption is increased by 20%.

\* Poison resistance has increased by 50%.

\* 10% increased attack and defense

"The hunting ground is not that bad....."

Ark looked at the information window and sighed. After developing the disinfectant, he had spent 10 days hunting at the saint's tombstone. He was level 325 when he entered the swamp and he had gained 9 levels by the 10th day.

"If I could use the disinfectant continuously....."

That was why Ark felt regret. The poison disinfectant could only be used 3 times a day. Since the disinfectant only lasted one hour, that was 3 hours in total. There were 8 hours in a day so he would be defenceless for the remaining 5 hours. It was

actually amazing that he managed to gain 9 levels in 10 days. Once he started hunting, he managed to eliminate all of the Mould Zombies. But without the disinfectant he would've managed to gain 20, no 30 levels.

"Isn't it impossible to grind more levels as long as there is mould here?"

When considering the amount of experience earned per hour, it was a viable hunting ground. However, that value fell when he took into account the fact that he had to take the disinfectant. In addition, the items that the zombies dropped were also bad. In other words, the experience and items wasn't worth the level. Yet there was a reason Ark had stayed there for 10 days.

"Buksil, you collect the items with Radun while Baekgu will collect the corpses of the zombies."

"Yes."

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak!

While hunting against a time limit, Ark had no room to pay attention to items. So he left the gathering of items to Buksil and Radun. Buksil would collect the items on the plains while Radun looked for the ones in the swamp. Ark lifted one of the Mould Zombie's corpses from Baekgu's back and took out his dismantling knife. Baekgu's body trembled and he hurriedly avoided the place. The ensuring scene was the reason his back became chilled. Ark used his knife to peel off the flesh from the zombie's corpse.

-You have succeeded in gathering 'Skin of the Dead' using Leather Extraction.

-You have succeeded in gathering 'Heart of the Dead' using Butchery.

This was the reason why Ark stayed at the saint's tombstone. It was in order to extract the items from the undead! They were necessary ingredients he needed to complete his Necromancer's Immortality Pill recipe. But the areas where the undead appeared in Seutandal and the continent were limited. Then he had completely forgotten about it during the Nakujuk's invasion.

'This is one of the best places to obtain the necessary ingredients for the Necromancer's Immortality Pill.'

That was Ark's first thought when he saw the zombies. Of course, it wasn't that easy to collect the ingredients even with a lot of zombies. His Leather Extraction and Butchery skill was still low so he could only get one item for every three or four he killed. Ark had to collect 2000 of the skin and heart, so gathering 4,000 items in total meant he had to kill approximately 12,000 zombies.

'It sounds like a joke after calculating the numbers. But I can't give up the chance to make a grade A recipe. I have to complete it even if it takes a lot of time. I can't miss this chance since I don't know where else I can encounter a large number of undead.'

Thus Ark spent 10 days in the gloomy swamp thanks to this resolution. But now it had reached the limit.

"Ark-nim, it has already been 10 days. Are long are we going to be stuck here?"

Buksil said with a sigh. Racard and Baekgu also made pained faces and complained.

"All I can see is swamp and zombies."

"This bad smell.....my nose is so numb and my head hurts."

"Same with me Master. This damp humidity is really difficult to handle."

Ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak ssak?

Radun looked like he couldn't understand the words coming from Buksil's mouth. But Ark also felt the same. Normally he roamed around everywhere or was in a dungeon. But Ark had spent the last 10 days hunting at the saint's tombstone. Although it ensured a safe haven, his breath clogged up every time he logged into the game to see the same scenery.

'I've gathered 1,200 skins and 1,300 hearts.....I've finally collected more than half. But this is the entrance of the swamp. Won't I have to continue hunting zombies while passing through the swamp? In addition, I can always stop and come back. It's not necessary to stay here much longer. I've also stocked up on many antidotes and disinfectants so I should leave soon.'

Ark checked his bag with a nod before standing up.

"Okay, the re-application time of the disinfectant has also ended so let's leave."

"Huh? We're leaving now?"

Buksil happily got up. Ark's party finally left the saint's tombstone they spent 10 days resting at and continued into the swamp.

"Let's keep an even pace. I'll go to the front."

Buksil hummed at the thought of leaving the swamp after 10 days. Naturally the Mould Zombies sometimes appeared and interrupted the party. However, Ark had already mastered the battle techniques against them and they just submerged into the swamp again. He discovered that the moulds wouldn't spread if the Mould

Zombies sunk into the swamp after dying. In fact, that was the reason Ark finally left the saint's tombstone. The duration of the disinfectant was 1 hour. If he ate it continuously than 3 hours was the limit. Then he would be defenceless for the remaining 5 hours! But considering the sheer size of the swamp, it would take more than 3 hours to find the City of the Dead. So after various experiments, he had figured out a way to kill the Mould Zombies without making them spread their spores. However, he wasn't 100% confident when applying this method. So he had to move forward before the number of zombies in the swamp increased and overwhelmed him. But when had things ever progressed as planned? Sometimes there were circumstances when the mould ended up spreading and he was forced to use the disinfectant.

'Damn, I thought it wouldn't be a problem but it's harder than I thought. I've already used two disinfectants. There's still 3 hours left until morning so I'll be defenceless for 2 hours if I eat one more.'

It was only possible to use one more disinfectant in the 3 hours! Ark started to feel uneasy. They've been wandering in the swamp for 5 hours and he still hadn't found the City of the Dead. In a situation like this, Buksil also started to feel some misgivings.

"Ark-nim, what will we do if we can't find the City of the Dead before you have to use the disinfectant again?"

"It can't be helped. We'll just have to exit the game and return when the time is over if that happens."

That was the last method Ark thought of. In a situation where he couldn't use the disinfectants, he couldn't take the risk. However, this plan had a fatal problem.

"T-then what about Baekgu?"

He could cancel Racard's summons but Baekgu would be left in the swamp by himself.

".....If we die then the results will still be the same. I just have to find a way before that happens."

Ark sighed and replied. Then Baekgu looked at Buksil and spoke in a tearful voice.

"M-Master! I hate moulds and I don't want to be left alone."

"Don't worry. If he can't find a way then I won't leave you alone! Ohhhhh, search Eyeballs! Baekgu, you use your sense of smell to search as well!"

Buksil shouted with a desperate expression and used his eyeballs. Ark looked at Buksil and Baekgu and had a thought.

'It's strange, didn't the swamp seem smaller when I looked at it on the map? If I moved in a straight line from the tombstones then we should've already exited the swamp and reached the City of the Dead.'

"Ah, Ark-nim! There's another glowing tombstone in front of me!"

Buksil exclaimed after scouting the area with his eyeballs. When he moved in the area Buksil indicated, a saint's tombstone soon appeared.

"Another saint's tombstone? Then there is one saint's tombstone at every fixed distance? Anyway, it's lucky. We can rest here until morning and then move on."

"I'm glad Baekgu."

"Yes, Master. Huk, it really is fortunate."

Baekgu replied in a tearful tone and ran to the saint's tombstone. However, Baekgu tilted his head to the side with a puzzled expression when he arrived.

"Eh? This is.....?"

"Eh? What's this? Fire and stripped down japtem? Who was camping here? Has someone else come here?"

Buksil muttered while exploring. However, Baekgu shook his head.

"No, our smell is the one left behind."

"What? Hik, come to think of it.....?"

Buksil touched the tombstone with surprise. A graffiti that said 'Buksil was here' was recorded on the tombstone. Although it was shameful writing on a tombstone..... That concept wasn't a problem for Buksil. Anyway, the situation became clearer thanks to Buksil's scribble.

"Get out of the way!"

Ark arrived after Buksil and checked the tombstone.

-The saint 'Betelgeuse' lies here.

'Betelgeuse.....it's definitely the previous tombstone. What on earth is going on?'

Ark opened the map with a puzzled expression. Ark's group had headed straight to the east after leaving the tombstone. He had checked the map while walking yet they had ended up in a circle. After checking the map again, the unconfirmed area was still obscured. Then somehow they had got their directions mixed up and was walking backwards?

"Ark-nim, what is going on?"

"Well.....damn, I want to ask that too....."

Ark worried about it for a while before standing up again.

"Racard, fly as high as possible and pay attention. If something changes then tell me immediately."

This time Ark ran across the swamp in the opposite direction. After running for 4 hours, the tombstone once again appeared in front of them.

"Again! Betelgeuse's tombstone. Racard!"

"I don't know, there were no changes. The direction also didn't seem to change."

Ark's face became even more serious at Racard's answer. He moved in two different directions yet ended up at the same spot. This couldn't be a coincidence.

'We're stuck in the swamp. Oh my god, I only became aware of it after ten days.....'

The swamp located in the Land of the Dead was one giant labyrinth. Now the Mould Zombies wasn't the problem. He was stuck in a labyrinth without any markers or clues. The only way to escape this place was to die and resurrect in another location.

'Wait? Markers or clues?'

Ark considered something and looked at the tombstone. It was the only glowing tombstone in a dark swamp. And he always ended up back here despite the direction he moved in. Then wasn't the tombstone itself a clue for escaping? No, it definitely was. In fact, Ark had been doubtful from the moment he saw the tombstone. He wandered why there were tombstones in a swamp. But if somebody made this tombstone as a marker to escape the swamp?

'There's no doubt about it. This tombstone is the only thing without an explanation. Obviously this tombstone is a reference point. The problem is what the reference point means.....'

Ark went over the tombstone carefully. However, he couldn't find anything no matter how hard he looked. Ark had thought it was strange so he checked the tombstone when he first found it. But he never found a secret passage or item.

'Damn, does that mean I can't reach the City of the Dead if I don't solve the tombstone's secret? The key to entering the City of the Dead is the tombstone..... But what type of hint is it? This ridiculous trap appearing out of nowhere..... Huh? Wait.....hint?'

Something flashed through Ark's head.

*-Heaven and earth, life and death, find the place where they are reversed and follow the hero's star path.*

It was one of the phrases he heard when he received his class change quest. And the place to complete the quest was the City of the Dead. Then wouldn't this phrase be a clue to reach the city? A big problem could be solved if he thought carefully. The place where life and death is reversed was clearly about people changing to the undead.

'Yes, then I have to follow the hero's star path to escape from this place.....'

The hero's star path? Did that mean follow the constellation? But he couldn't even see the sky while in the gloomy swamp. Thanks to that, his dark attribute bonus was applied even in the daytime.

"Heaven and earth is reversed.....hero's star.....what does that mean? Wait? D-don't tell me.....?"

Ark had a flash of inspiration after thinking for a while.

"Buksil, do you know anything about constellations?"

"Huh? Ah, no....."

"Sheesh, do some studying!"

Ark declared coldly and exited the game unit. Then he sat down in front of his computer and accessed the internet.

'There's no doubt about it. Saint Betelgeuse, I heard about it when I was a child. If I remember correctly.....'

Ark searched the internet for the name Betelgeuse. He confirmed that his guess was correct when he saw the information.

*-Betelgeuse ( $\alpha$  Orionis) a red variable star that can be easily seen.*

Yes, Betelgeuse was the name of a star in the Orion constellation. All of Ark's questions were answered with that information.

'That's it. The saint's tombstone contains the name of an Orion star. Then the meaning of the rest of the phrase is automatically solved.

The hero mentioned in the class change profession quest was Orion, son of Poseidon and the one who drove the monster away from Chios Island. If he swapped the sky and earth around, then the tombstone would act like a star on the ground and the mystery would be solved. Now the only thing left was following the hero's star path. However, that was also solved after reading the rest of the information on Betelgeuse. The first tombstone that Ark had found in the swamp was Betelgeuse's. Then that was the starting point. And Betelgeuse was the brightest star in the Orion constellation. If so, then the next saint's tombstone Ark had to find was.....

'The other bright  $\beta$  Orionis star, Rigel.'

Ark immediately searched for information on Rigel. Rigel was located in Orion's left foot. If he applied Orion's constellation to the swamp using Betelgeuse as a marker, he would have to head in the direction of Rigel.

"That's it, I found it! Hero Maban's puzzle has been solved!"

At first, he had been quite puzzled but now he felt a sense of accomplishment. This was the reason why people enjoyed brain puzzle games.

"Hyun-woo, have you finished for today?"

While Ark was skipping around his room, his mother's voice could be heard outside the door. His mother was living with him so he couldn't lie to her anymore about making money from the game. Well, luckily his mother seemed to have received a hint from Gwon Hwa-rang so she didn't protest. She was just worried when he played the game for an excessively long time. Ark opened the door quickly and grinned at his mother.

"Not yet. I need to go back to do something important. But it will take quite a bit of time."

"Please don't go overboard."

"Yes, don't worry. I'll still exercise every morning."

Ark replied before entering the game unit again.

“Huhuhu, Hero Maban, you can’t catch me with this degree of riddle. I’ll solve the rest of your puzzle and seize your legacy!”

Ark’s eyes brightened as he entered New World. The person who entered the unit wasn’t Hyun-woo but Ark.

## Act 6: City of the Dead

“A village!”

Two days passed before Ark managed to leave the swamp. After using the disinfectant at the appropriate time and sweeping through the zombies, Ark finally arrived at his destination. It was safe to say that Ark had come to the right conclusion. By applying the Orion constellation to the swamp, he moved from Betelgeuse to Rigel to Bellatrix and so on.....the names on the tombstone appeared in the order of brightness. It took an average of 2 hours to travel between tombstones so the threat of the Mould Zombies wasn’t a problem. Then Ark finally landed on the last area which corresponded with Orion’s sword. When looking at Orion, there is a nebula which includes hundreds of irregular star. This dark area was where his final destination, the City of the Dead was located.

‘Unfortunately I couldn’t gather all of the necessary ingredients from the swamp.....’

But the immortality pill wasn’t urgent at the moment. He wanted to find Razak and complete his profession change quest. He could return to the swamp after completing the quest and slowly gather what he needed from the Mould Zombies. Anyway, an information window appeared after he saw the village.

-City of the Dead

You have located a suspicious place where darkness and death spreads over the land. The place you have found in the swamp are ruins where ancient secrets have been kept for hundreds of years. There is an astonishing number of undead resting here. They are different from the frozen undead that are frequently seen in Seutandal. Why the undead are living together is still unknown.

<Explorer’s Knowledge: Hidden city discovery bonus (Skill Points: 20)>

20 skills points were given after his difficulty finding it! Just like the information window described, the City of the Dead was actually ruins. There was the wreckage of ancient castle walls scattered everywhere.

The residents? Monsters? At any rate, the majority of the NPCs were dead but some of them were skeletons or zombies. To be precise, zombies and skeletons are different from the dead. They literally had the impression of 'someone who just died.'

'How will I enter?'

Ark hid in a suitable place while looking through the city using Buksil's Vampire's Eyes. The information window regarding the residents wasn't red so they weren't hostile. But it wasn't blue which indicated a favourable relationship. It was grey which meant the NPCs could take both sides.

'They are grey so they won't be excessively aggressive.....'

He had learnt from his troubled experience in Dark Earth. What guarantee did he have that he wouldn't experience hostility in this village? Of course, there was the method of using 'Stealth.' However, Ark's purpose wasn't simply sneaking around. He needed to find Razak, renew the resurrection point and look for Hero Maban's hidden legacy. It wasn't possible to do that while limited by 'Stealth.'

'I need a method which won't be suspected by the residents. Ah, that's right.'

Ark deliberated for a short moment before asking Buksil.

"Buksil, have you learnt the sewing skill?"

"What does Ark-nim think of me?"

"Huh? What does that mean?"

"Sewing is a basic skill for merchants. A merchant's first step is cutting fabric and selling it as clothes to make a profit."

"Stop talking about trivial things and just tell me if you can do it."

"My level is advanced, advanced!"

Buksil arrogantly stuck his stomach out.

"Okay, then please make me some clothes out of this."

"Ark-nim, you had fabrics? Hik, w-what is this?"

Buksil panicked and withdrew. Ark had taken some leather out of his bag. However, this wasn't ordinary leather obtained from animals. It was the leather of the Mould Zombies. Yes, the greatest difference between Ark and the residents was their appearance. Ark's group had a good complexion compared to the tattered and rotten bodies of the residents. Then the method was simple. Wouldn't he become similar if he wore clothes made out of the leather of the Mould Zombies? However, Buksil just shook his head.

"You want me to make clothes out of this?"

"You can't do it?"

"No, I can but....."

"Shut up and just do it."

Buksil started tearing up at Ark's growl and started stitching the leather together. Although Buksil wanted to die, the skin of the dead was still leather. Anyway, he used his sewing skill to make some clothes.

"These trivial clothes were made with advanced sewing skills. It is humiliating."

-The Dead's Leather Clothes

Armour type: General Leather

Defense: —

Durability: 10/10)

Weight: 2

User restriction: —

It was a costume which made the wearer look like a zombie. A rotten smell drifted from the ragged clothes. It would be easy for him to be mistaken as an undead wearing these clothes. No, before that anyone who wore these clothes would be considered insane. It certainly wasn't clothes that sane people would wear. Since the leather was skinned from a corpse, the leather drooped in several places. In addition, there were poisonous moulds stuck on several places. The thought of wearing such terrible leather clothes was enough to cause goose bumps.

'This looks a little intense even for me.'

However, he had wasted 30 'Skin of the Dead' making the clothes. Ark swallowed down his nausea and wore the clothes over his armour. Soon a plausible undead was created.

'Ugh, why does this uncomfortable feeling seem to pierce through to my skin? Although I feel dirty, this will definitely fool the undead.'

"Okay, create three more identical clothes."

"Hik, do I have to wear one of those three?"

"Huh? Why else would I waste valuable leather on creating three more sets of clothes? You are the cameraman."

"C-can't I just stay here? The village isn't far so using my eyeballs to take the video won't be a problem, even with the zombies around. Then Baekgu can also stay here." Buksil said with a stutter.

He had a good point. In the old days, Karakul was able to use his eyeballs for surveillance so it wouldn't be a problem if Buksil was separated from his. So there was no reason for Buksil to come along.

If the situation worsened and they had to run away, he would have to laboriously collect the Skin of the Dead again in order to make another set of clothes to enter. If he didn't have to create it for Buksil and Baekgu then Ark would save 60 leathers.

"Okay, if there are any problems then you can contact me with the eyeball."

When Vampire's Eye rose to an intermediate level, it gained a communication function. Well, it already wasn't normal with the video shooting method attached to it. Gaining an additional communication ability wasn't that big a surprise. Therefore it was convenient even if Buksil was far away. Ark nodded and Racard quickly interrupted.

"M-Master, do I have to go too?"

"Do you want to fight?"

.....They were expected words. So Ark who was wearing the leather clothes and Racard headed towards the city.

'Won't I see as soon as I enter? Whether they are tricked or not.....I'll have to look carefully at the atmosphere.'

Ark quickened his pace as he approached the entrance of the village. Although it was difficult to tell the entrance thanks to the ruins, there were dead soldiers standing guard like in most villages.

If the guards showed a hostile reaction then he would quickly flee. Was he lucky? Although they lingered a bit, the guards didn't show any hostile reactions. No, it was like they had no interest from the beginning. The guards just opened their mouths and stared into the sky absentmindedly.

'What the, what is this? Then these disgusting clothes weren't necessary?'

He wore those clothes for that exact purpose, but now he felt annoyed after he was ignored. But he still wasn't careless. There was no evidence that the guards were affected by the clothes but there was also no evidence that the guards weren't affected by the clothes. There was no guarantee how they would react if he took off the clothes.

'Well the first checkpoint has been passed.'

Ark sighed with relief after entering the village. Just like the guards, the residents didn't pay any attention to Ark and Racard. However, Ark felt a different type of tension. It was natural since there was no feelings of life in the city. Although there were many dead people wandering among the debris, it was so quiet that he would be able to hear a needle drop. They seemed more like dolls made of paper or wood. Once again he realized that it was truly the City of the Dead. The dead just continued whatever they were doing in silence. Some of them were clearing the wreckage in order to write something on the ground while others were repeatedly piling up logs. Some souls continuously bumped their head against a wall and muttered something. It was like a documentary of psychiatric patients.

"..... What the, these guys? They're strangely terrifying."

Racard grasped the hem of Ark's clothes like a young child and muttered. They were even causing fear in a vampire.

'How will I find Razak and Hero Maban's legacy?'

Ark explored the city while looking through the rubble at each corner. During his walk, he found many skeletons with a neutral alignment but no Razak. After 2 hours, Ark arrived at a shattered building in the centre of the village.

'I can't get a sense of where to look. My pet won't move from his summoning location without a good reason. Razak is definitely somewhere in this place..... Then should I look for Hero Maban's legacy first?'

*Look for the forgotten battlefield and let the scattered pieces of the moon from the top of the best seat lead you to the resting place.*

That was the second clue that he received. There was no reason to think about it. The forgotten battlefield was obviously these ruins. And obviously the best seat was the

highest building in the ruins, so didn't he have to climb it in order to look for the moon markings?

'Is the tallest building the tower?'

Ark had occasionally seen a tower while wandering around the place. There was no doubt that the tower was the highest place in the village. Since it was in a broken state, it wasn't an easy task to climb the tower. The stairs had large gaps in them so he was forced to just climbing gear to scale the wall. After an hour, Ark finally reached the top of the tower.

"Now, shall I look for the scattered pieces of the moon?"

After climbing the tower, he could see the city by looking down. But no matter how hard he looked, he couldn't see anything related to the moon.

"What the? Shouldn't I find it here?"

Ark started to feel annoyance as he looked around. He had finally reached the City of the Dead after much suffering. He couldn't find any signs of Razak and a seemingly easy clue regarding his profession change quest had once again turned into a maze. Razak and his class change quest was definitely here but he wasn't able to find any clues after hours of searching.

"Do I have to keep roaming around the village until I find something?"

Ark climbed down the tower and sighed. After walking towards a emptier part of the city, he suddenly saw the dead lining up on a street.

'Eh? What's this? Those dead people?'

Ark became curious and headed towards them. The dead were gathered in front of a pile of trash.

-Fossilized bone

The unearthed bones of an ancient monster. The intended use is unknown.

-Old and Rusty Shield

Armour type: Steel Shield

Defense: 30

Durability: 7/10

Weight: 30

User Restriction: Level 150 Warriors

It is impossible to guess what this shield is made out of. The overall shape and embossed patterns on the surface seem to indicate that it was a high quality item. However, even an excellent blacksmith can't get rid of the products of time. It has been neglected for so long that the iron has oxidized. No warriors would entrust their lives to this shield.

'They're similar to the items that the zombies in the swamp dropped.'

He had collected 70 such items from the Mould Zombies. But he honestly didn't know if they would be bought at any stores. If he calculated it by the scrap iron then he would be lucky to receive 1 silver per kilogram.

There was no space in his bag so he just kept the ones worth 1 silver. But why were the dead lining up for such items? Ark was thinking that when something interrupted him.

"Going to buy.....are you going to buy.....?"

The dead stall owner spoke in a testy voice.

'Eek? What the? This was a business? No, the dead are able to talk?'

Ark was unable to understand the sudden situation. After Ark was quiet for a while, the dead person immediately spoke in an irritated voice.

"You're buying.....if you don't buy.....then can you leave?"

"Oh, no, that.....you can talk?"

"What the, just now.....are you making fun of me?"

"Of course not."

Ark hurriedly shook his head. The city was so quiet he never imagined the dead could talk. He also had preconceived ideas from the dead people he saw in Seutandal. If the dead could talk then the situation was different. Wouldn't it be easier to find clues regarding Razak and his quest? Therefore it was necessary for the dead to have a good impression of him.

"If you're not going to buy.....then get lost."

The dead store owner said as he raised his hand. Ark thought for a moment before speaking.

"Everything that you're selling looks incredible. My mind didn't know what it wanted so I unknowingly just stared at it."

"Huhu.....you have a good eye."

"If the items are such good quality that wouldn't they be expensive?" But I don't have enough right now....."

"Boo.....for a poor person.....I have no business."

The attitude of the dead person changed 180 degrees when Ark said he had no money. So a poor person was even ignored by the dead? Apart from that, the dead was lined up to buy miscellaneous items? What good was this stuff to the dead? No, hadn't he seen in movies that the dead was buried with riches because they would use it in the afterlife? Probably the most engaged people in this city were the dead who engaged in trade. Ark muttered to himself before he suddenly heard Buksil's voice coming from the eyeball.

"What are you saying? I'll run a business even after I die. That is the nature of merchants. Ohhhh, we're really seeing the ultimate merchant! How wonderful. I respect.....ouch!"

"What the, noisy.....an eyeball?"

The dead merchant coldly stared at the eyeball after it spoke. The atmosphere became hard to figure out.

Ark kicked the eyeball and started talking again.

"Please don't pay attention to it. Anyway, I heard that someone I know is in this city. Have you ever heard the name Razak?"

"Razak..... I've never heard that name before."

"So have you seen anything that resembles fragments of the moon? Do you live in this area?"

"My memory.....I don't have any regarding that."

The dead person shook his head at Ark's questions. Ark was unable to find a clue again and sighed before turning around. Then he suddenly heard a thud, thud, thus sound coming from his foot. The dead merchant frowned and spat out curses.

"Damn it! Again..... That bastard.....if he doesn't stop then I'll kill him!"

Everybody was already dead but the merchant had a really serious expression. Ark stopped and turned back around.

"What's wrong?"

"This noise.....I keep on hearing this noise.....I'm going crazy because of it!"

"Who is making this noise?"

"I don't know..... It seems to be the one stuck in the underground prison.....he was silent until a few months ago.....then all of a sudden he started making these noises..... Thanks to that, I'm about to go crazy!"

The dead merchant yanked at the hair on his head and looked at Ark.

"Ah, that's right..... You.....didn't you say you liked my goods? How about this..... The person making the noise.....can you make him stop? If you do.....my collection containing the best items....I'll give you one..... I'm really going crazy because of this noise..... Because of that noise.....guests won't come here!"

"Huh?"

Ark asked with a befuddled look. There was a ringing sound and the information window appeared.

-The Noise coming from Underground.

For the last few months, a merchant operating in the City of the Dead has been hearing a noise and it is causing him enormous stress. If you remove the source of the noise then the merchant has promised to give you one of his goods.

<Difficulty: ???>

'What the, I can get a quest from the dead as well?'

Ark read the information window with an absurd expression. Honestly, he didn't care about the miscellaneous items he would get as a reward.

‘Still, the quest doesn’t seem that hard to settle? If I complete the quest then I might be able to get more information. If he gives me the best item from his collection then I might even receive an item for my summons.’

Anyway, Ark had nothing to do except searching the city so he accepted the quest.

“I understand.”

“Ohhh, thank you..... This is a key I previously found..... It is probably used to open the door to the prison..... Quickly go and hit that guy.”

The dead merchant said as he handed Ark a rusty key. Ark received the key and went underground to the basement. Although some of the place had collapsed, he was able to pass through. He followed the underground passage down for a short time before some prison bars appeared. The sound was clearly audible as the key opened the prison doors. The sound rang through the whole dungeon. Ark became a little tense at the noise.

‘The fellow making this noise for several months....is he an undead?’

Ark pulled out his sword and entered the prison. How far did he proceed? Ark was just walking past a jail cell when he felt something suddenly come to the bars. There was a crunching sound as something grabbed the iron windows and shaking it.

“Huk, what, what the? How surprising! That is the cause of the noise!”

Ark withdrew and raised his sword. All of a sudden, Radun became astounded and crawled up Ark’s arm to listen to the noise.

Ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

“What the? Radun, what is it?”

Ssak ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak ssak?

Clack clack clack! Clack clack clack clack clack!

There was a familiar sound coming from the cell Radun was examining.

“Eh? This sound....?”

Ark winced and focused his attention on the prison. Surprisingly, the skeleton shaking the iron window.....was Razak!

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Razak's face was thrilled as he saw them. But that impression immediately disappeared because of the insincere interpreter.

"I believed that Master would come."

Racard picked his nose and murmured.

'If he was here then it would be impossible to find him by searching the village.'

Ark met Razak and listened to the summary of his situation. The identity of the noise annoying the dead merchant for the last few months was Razak. Thanks to the special familiar's contract, the summon couldn't leave the place they were bound to. The place Razak was summoned from was the underground dungeon. After Ark used Pledge of Death, Razak had been forcefully recalled. From then on, Razak had waited in this dark and lonely place for Ark's to come. However, after a few months.....that's right, it had already been a month since he parted from Razak. And one month in reality corresponded to three months in New World. Razak felt increasingly uneasy as time passed. Was he abandoned? No, would Ark even be able to find him? Razak was unable to sit there quietly after feeling so uneasy. Although he knew it was impossible, Razak used his whole body to try to escape. That noise reached the merchant who started feeling hysterical.

'This guy.....'

Unlike Ark, his summons felt 100% of the physical pain. But despite that, did he keep on running his body into the wall to return to Ark? In addition, it was also because Ark died and Razak shared his health that Razak was forcibly recalled. But it took one month for them to finally reunite. He felt sorry towards Razak when he thought about it. Then Racard snorted and muttered.

"Heung, are you normal? Why would you crash into the wall? And Master shouldn't praise him. He's living in a place like this. I always knew he had a dark side."

"So you were in this cell when the contract initiated? But why a prison cell?"

"Well, let's see. He died in prison. No doubt he was an incredibly bad person."

Clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Razak glared at Racard and protested. After a moment, Razak started looking gloomy and sighed. According to Racard's interpretation, even Razak didn't know why he was an undead in this place. He lost all memories of his past once resurrected as an undead. He had a few fragments of memories but they were vague like a dream.

"As expected, you are a bad guy. Didn't you die in prison? You're probably not even a former knight."

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

"Are you completely sure about your memory of being a knight? Don't make me laugh. Why should I believe it?"

Clack clack clack, ttadadak?

"Noisy, are you just remembering the positive things about yourself? You should address me with honorifics in the future. Huhuhu, the quality of my body is different from yours who lived in a prison. It doesn't matter if I believe your words about being a knight. Now I am an Earl. Earl Racard. Hahaha, come and show respect. I am.....ouch! What the? You just hit my head, my head."

"Then don't act like that. Do you want me to hit you?"

"Damn, you only hate me."

"That's because only you behave hatefully. Is that any way to treat a colleague you haven't seen for several months?"

"I don't care."

"If you say one more word then you'll earn the whip."

"Ouch! Okay, don't hit my head again."

Ark hit Racard's head before approaching Razak.

"Anyway, it is lucky that I've found you. "Now we have to register you."

He used the keys received from the dead merchant to open the door but Razak couldn't leave. Ark had to install the Summoning Port and registration in the prison cell.

'So one thing has finished.'

Now the only thing left was to look for clues regarding his profession change quest. But he had one thing to do before that. Although it is a simple one, a quest was still a quest. He neatly resolved it so shouldn't he receive compensation? Ark left the dungeon and went back to the dead merchant. Then he experienced something truly absurd.

“That.....What are you saying..... I requested something?”

The dead merchant asked with a puzzled look.

“Eh? No, you asked for my help a short while ago. The noise from underground was driving you crazy. Weren’t you going to give me something from your collection if I stopped the noise?”

“That....I don’t know anything about that..... You’re interfering with my business.....get lost.”

“What, what the? What about my reward?”

“Ah, you’re really loud..... The noise you’re making..... How many times do I have to say it.....? I have no such memories..... So I shouldn’t have to pay you and become a beggar.....”

“You don’t like it? Are you done speaking?”

Ark grabbed the dead merchant’s collar. Ark was kind to NPCs. It was the same even if the NPC was an undead. However, the reason Ark was friendly to NPCs was because it was profitable. If the quest NPC was trying to get out of giving him compensation then he had no problems stabbing them. The merchant became puzzled by Ark’s bloody attitude.

“What the! What are you doing.....? Ah, understood..... I understand..... okay..... Although the noise is unpleasant, this is still a business.....take this. Don’t bother me anymore or else I won’t stay calm.”

The dead merchant looked through his pockets and threw a small coin.

-Dead Coin

A copper coin made hundreds of years ago. But these coins weren’t used as money. In other words, they’re commemorative coins made in honour of the dead. It appears to have no value as money in modern times.

-The quest <Noise coming from the Underground> has been completed.

The quest instantly completed with the dead merchant threw him the coin. He completed a quest yet he received no experience and not even one copper coin?

“This, is he treating me like a beggar?”

“Ark-nim! Behind you, behind!”

Buksil suddenly burst out as his eyeballs had been scanning the area. When he turned around, he saw that some guards were approaching.

“Son of a bitch!”

Ark ground his teeth together and pushed the dead merchant away. Of course he didn't forget to collect the Dead Coin which fell to the floor. It was still a reward no matter how trivial it was. Who wouldn't become angry?

“Let's leave, that damn bastard!”

Although he avoided the shop because of the guards, his anger wasn't easily soothed. A NPC trying to get out of giving a quest reward? What kind of nonsense was that? Then Racard who had been talking to Razak sighed and approached.

Clack clack? Clack clack clack clack? Clack clack clack clack.

Ark felt like he had been slapped on the head at Racard's ensuing interpretation.

“Master, Razak said that the dead merchant wasn't trying to trick you.”

“Wasn't trying to trick me?” Didn't you see it? He definitely asked me for help.”

“That.....the merchant really didn't remember the deal.”

“He couldn't remember something that happened only 10 minutes before?”

Razak sighed at Ark's words and explained. When someone died, they would go to heaven. Well, he actually didn't know what the heavens was like in New World. However, those with a strong lingering regret when dying would be unable to go to heaven and become an undead. And the dead living in this city had significant regrets. That's why the merchant continued to sell japtem and the guards defended the city for hundreds of years. In Razak's case, his regret was 'losing the target of his loyalty.' That's why Skull swore his allegiance to Ark the first time he was summoned. If Ark hadn't summoned Razak then he would probably still be stuck in the underground prison with his regrets.

“The dead currently exist here but they've repeating their lives for hundreds of years.”

Yes, that was the problem. The dead were an existence of the past. Ark might share the same space but he was a living human being of another time. So while the dead remembered the other existences from the same time as them, they couldn't remember Ark who was from a different time. It was the boundaries between the

living and the dead! The only exception to this was Ark and Razak due to their bond. Ark felt empty after hearing the explanation.

“What the? Then accepting the quests means nothing?”

It was fortunate that he even received the coin from it. Anyway, he had no intention of staying here long.

“Sheesh, I found Razak so I should quickly complete my profession quest.”

Ark complained and stood up. However, the dead merchant’s quest actually gave surprising benefits to Ark. The first one was that he found Razak in the underground dungeon. The second benefit was that he figured out a way to complete his profession change quest.

‘I was wrong. The best seat didn’t mean the highest place.’

Ark had thought that the City of the Dead was merely ruins. However, he heard from the dead merchant that an ancient king used to rule here. The dungeon and castle were located in the city centre. Yes, the best seat wasn’t the tower but the symbolic King’s throne. Ark stood up and immediately went to the castle. Unlike the underground dungeon, the upper levels had a lot of guards gathered. These soldiers were there to prevent the intrusion of outsiders. Ark was able to understand these soldiers after listening to Razak. The guards outside were to prevent outsiders entering the city. Meanwhile, the soldiers lingered in order to protect the closest thing to their king.

Ark used ‘Stealth’ to break into the upper levels. When he reached the top floor, the hall where the King’s throne was located appeared. On the throne, the King was sitting blankly with a crown on his head.

‘Even the King has lingered here? What is the place he is staring at? Does that place have anything to do with the King’s lingering spirit? What is the King’s regret that is keeping him on earth? Eh, that is?’

Ark followed the King’s gaze with curiosity and his eyes widened. The place the King was staring at was the front balcony. From that angle, he could see the top of the tower and a panoramic view of the city with a lot of debris.

‘If that building wasn’t broken.....?’

The moon. While debris was scattered all over the place, a building shaped like a crescent moon was visible. Perhaps the building would form a full moon if it was intact. And the shape could only be seen if looked from above this building.

'This is why the clue said to look for the scattered moon at the best seat!'

Ark opened his mouth, checked the location of the building and sneaked out. When he checked his mouth and visited the place, the building seemed to be a temple. It wasn't that big but a strange object occupied the middle of the temple. It was a huge sarcophagus with a dead warrior holding a sword carved into it.

"Sarcophagus..... This is slightly unexpected? Didn't the clue say to find the resting place after following the scattered pieces of the moon? If so, then I have to search this place for another clue.....but the only thing here is the sarcophagus."

"Hehehe. Ark-nim, look at this."

Ark had been scratching his head with confusion. Then he turned around as he heard Buksil's voice. There were three holes present on the warrior carved into the sarcophagus, one on the two eyes and one on the mouth. Buksil's two eyeballs were hovering over the warrior's eyes and turning around. The sight of the eyeballs on the warrior's solemn face was quite funny.

"Please stop that. I'm trying to search."

Ark muttered before he realized something strange.

'Wait? That is a sarcophagus. If this temple was built to house the sarcophagus then why would there be holes in the eyes and mouth? Perhaps.....?'

A scene he had previously seen in a movie about the Middle Ages appeared in his head. He couldn't remember exactly, but the movie was about the ancient Greeks or Romans. In the movie, three coins would be placed on the eyes and mouth of a warrior who died in battle before he was placed into the sarcophagus. During those times, the people believed that the dead needed to pay 3 coins to cross the river and enter the other world.

"Ohhh, that's why a person should study these things. "Hey Buksil, come out of there!"

"Ugh, you don't have to grip so hard! Those are my eyeballs!"

Ark pulled the eyeballs from the sarcophagus and tried to insert a coin. But the hole was too small for his coin to be inserted.

"Eh? What the? These coins don't work? Then.....?"

Ark retrieved the small coin he received from the dead merchant earlier. Didn't it make perfect sense? Ark once again viewed the information window regarding the Dead Coin.

'The Dead Coin was a commemorative coin for the dead!

The problem was that he needed 3 Dead Coins to unravel the sarcophagus' mystery. However, that problem was easily solved by Ark.

"Huhuhu, this is a chance to get revenge on the merchant!"

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

"Aaaaah! Again.....it is starting again.....that stupid noise.....!"

The dead merchant yanked at his hair furiously as the floor started ringing with the noise. Then Ark approached and asked quickly.

"Shall I settle the problem?"

"Huh? You.....who are you?"

As expected, the dead merchant hadn't remembered his earlier argument with Ark.

"You don't need to know that. Do you want me to solve this problem?"

"Oh, really.....! Then I'll ask you..... Get rid of that noise.....I'll give you an item from my best collection..... Oh, you'll need this key to get there..... Huh? I clearly left that key here....."

"The key is not needed."

Ark accepted the quest and quickly headed to the dungeon. Yes, Ark was planning to trick the dead merchant who had short term amnesia. The merchant couldn't remember anything related to Ark. In other words, he couldn't remember that Ark had solved the noise problem. So he made Razak go back to the dungeon to make noise while he went and accepted the quest from the merchant. Of course, the merchant also forgot that he had given the quest in the first place. Therefore wouldn't it be better if he grabbed the merchant's collar and threatened him from the beginning? Thus Ark continuously threatened the dead merchant. However, he wouldn't receive the quest if he used the 'Intimidation' skill. Ark started to understand that the merchant's reactions was a part of the system. Although he originally thought he wouldn't receive a quest reward, this quest reward was designed to be received when Ark treated the merchant in a horrible manner. If the

merchant refused then he would just have Razak make noise again. If he wasn't threatened using Intimidation then he would throw something.

"This.....you really seem like a beggar.....how pitiful.....take this and get lost."

This time the dead merchant threw a bone. He had repeated the quest many times as the merchant threw random items. Skin of the Dead, a broken jug, a lost shield.....they were all items that had been thrown. After Ark repeated it 10 times, he finally collected 3 Dead Coins.

'Phew, the repetitive quest in order to receive goods has finished. Now I've collected all three. I can insert the coins like a vending machine and find a clue.....'

Ku ku ku ku ku!

After inserting the three coins into the warrior, there was a mechanical sound and the sarcophagus started vibrating. Then it moved sideways as a dark space appeared. Suddenly a message window appeared in front of Ark.

-The Underground Crypt.

You've found the underground crypt hidden in the City of the Dead. The residents here feared death and worshipped it since ancient times. Everybody was equal despite good or bad, wrong or right, or status. So this temple was created in the heart of the city as a refuge. Once again, this is a resting place for the dead. If a person with greedy desires steps foot in here then they'll have to pay the price.

<Explorer's Knowledge: Hidden dungeon bonus (Skill Points: 10)>

*Seek the scattered pieces of the moon and find the resting place.*

That was when his second clue for his profession change quest was solved.

## **Act 7: Rhapsody Melody**

"That is everything."

"Thank you."

Roco handed a cup of water to the sweating Sid and laughed. Sid drank as he looked at the front of the store and muttered.

“By the way, 1 gold is typical for Ark-nim.”

“It is surprisingly popular.”

While Ark was elsewhere, they were in charge of the store’s operations. And the store did a monthly exhibition. This time it was a 1 gold sale. All the merchandise spread on the low bench was 1 gold.

“Items with low durability that can’t be used for long.....”

Sid turned pale and shook his head. The items Ark was selling for 1 gold was fairly amazing. Although a lot of the items’ original prices were under 1 gold, they were magic items that could be used for 50 levels. The reason he could sell it for 1 gold was because of the durability. The repair skill that people initially learnt sometimes failed. When that happened, the maximum durability of the items would fall. In addition, people also learnt techniques to strengthen the rating of the item which would also decrease durability if failed. Those were the items that Ark aimed at. If they constantly failed with repairing or upgrading, the durability would fall to 1~5. Ark had Sid go and buy those items which were being sold as scrap metal in Nagaran. Sid frankly couldn’t see a way to sell those items. However, there was one thing Sid hadn’t considered. Of course, it wasn’t possible to use such equipment in battles. But no matter how much durability was left, they still had the appearance of a perfect magic item. They could be worn as costumes. Users were willing to spend 1 gold on deluxe costumes that they could wear.

“Baby, do you want me to buy you this wonderful magic armour? I’ll be proud to buy it for my girlfriend.”

“But aren’t you lacking money at the moment?”

“Huhuhu, Ark’s store is only selling it for 1 gold.”

“Ah, you can buy the magic armour for 1 gold at Ark’s store!”

“Everybody, Ark’s store is selling items for 1 gold!”

Jana was also advertising at the entrance of the village. Therefore, the store was booming and its contribution to the village quickly increased every day. While Ark was wandering around the City of the Dead, his assets were steadily recovering.

‘Ark-nim always sees everything he starts through to the end. I’ve become very successful as a merchant.’

While Sid was thinking this, Roco counted the box and tilted her head as she asked.

“The amount of resources this time is slightly less than the previous trade.”

“That’s because the situation in Nagaran is quite a mess these days. Every guild is buying weapons and consumables in bulk so the prices have jumped. If I purchase goods at this time and sell it in Seutandal then we’ll only receive a loss.”

“The atmosphere in Nagaran isn’t good?”

“The explanation is a little long…….”

“It’s okay. I need to know in case I have to go to Nagaran.”

“As Roco-nim knows, Nagaran has been quiet because the 5 coalitions that occupy it, including the Hermes Guild, are very powerful. If one of them moves then the other Lords would all act to stop them.”

“Hrmmm, then what is happening now?”

Roco asked with a curious look. Although several exhibitions were held in the store, Ark’s plan was to organize a trade route between his businesses on the continent and Seutandal. And he left that work to Sid.

Sid ran the Continental Commerce Firm in Nagaran. It was a battlefield where a lot of users always gathered. The characteristic of high level users was that they lost all their starting naivety. Most users when they started the game would treasure even 1 copper. If they could receive a few more silvers then they wouldn’t hesitate to carry their heavy bags to the next village. But at the late level, users tended to ignore silver and focused on gold. If their bags were heavy with japtem only worth a few silvers, they wouldn’t care about market price and would just sell it at the nearest store. To Ark it wasn’t any different from throwing money on the side of a road. This tendency was particularly strong in Nagaran. So Sid received the special mission to buy such items cheaply and then he would hand it to Ark’s store when the quantity was sufficient. Those goods would then flow onto Seutandal and so on.

It was the trade route linking Nagaran, Lancel and Seutandal! The triangular route envisioned by Ark was being put into motion. However, the triangular trade route still wasn’t firmly established. That’s why they planned the exhibitions just in case. Anyway, now the situation in Nagaran couldn’t be separated from Ark’s store anymore. So it was natural that Roco as the store manager would pay attention to Nagaran.

“It started to crumble when the Hermes Alliance hired mercenaries to conquer Seutandal and failed. The former balance was broken. So I don’t know what will happen in the future as all the coalitions have made moves to expand their military armaments.”

“But is the Hermes Alliance very large? The Alliance lost 3000 gold so wouldn’t that affect them?”

“That’s a little complicated.”

Sid explained.

“In fact, that is equivalent to the profit the Hermes guild receives from Silvana. 3,000 gold is a lot of money but it isn’t that much to the Alliance. But the problem is Jewel and Duke.”

It was determined that the failure to conquer Seutandal was Jewel and Duke’s fault. If Jewel hadn’t been so greedy and asked for help immediately then the situation would be different. Therefore the guilds belonging to the alliance requested the two of them to withdraw from the guild. However, Raiden was a pioneer and just ignored the Alliance’s request. But Hermes was an alliance, not a guild anymore. Currently 8 guilds belonged to the Hermes Alliance. When the alliance’s leader ignored their request to kick out Jewel and Duke, their dissatisfaction accumulated. In the end, some guilds withdrew from the Alliance and even joined up with other coalitions. Since the scale had grown so large, management had become difficult.

“A lot of the regular customers at the Continental Commerce firm are members of the Hermes Alliance. That’s how I learnt this information. Although the information was hidden, a person with knowledge will know all of it.”

Sid gave a creepy laugh.

“Anyway, the 5 coalitions in Nagaran are secretly preparing for war. Although I don’t know when it will start, the sieges between established Lords is different from before. If the conditions are met, the war can begin without the Lord’s permission.”

That’s why the prices of equipment and consumables in Nagaran were inflating. However, Sid just spoke like he didn’t care.

“Well, whatever. The prices of various precious metals have gone down instead. That’s because each coalition are selling their precious metals in order to buy war supplies. So most of the resources this time are precious metals. You can sell it to users who have learnt the engraving or enchantment skill or you can sell it in Seutandal for a profit.”

“You must’ve gone through a lot.”

“Gone through a lot.....”

Sid scratched his head as he recalled the past before saying.

“In fact, I thought it was slightly unfair when I first received the job at the Continental Commerce Firm. But it was actually quite okay after I’ve experienced it. I can use the public funds from the Continental Commerce Firm to buy the [Safe Travel] scroll and I’m also safe from chaotic users.”

On the surface, the Hermes Alliance was the one who received the tax from the Continental Commerce Firm. Therefore the Hermes Alliance was obligated to protect the firm. Since Sid was trading under the flag of the Hermes Alliance, chaotic users wouldn’t dare recklessly attack him. But in fact, more than half of Sid’s travels were under Ark’s directions. The Hermes Alliance was only helping Ark’s businesses. If Raiden was aware of this then he might just end up fainting. Anyway, thanks to that Sid was able to focus on business for the last few months.

“Huhuhu, fortunately I’ve reached level 300.”

“Level 300?”

Sid was the foreign division manager of the Continental Commerce Firm which was growing larger every year. He gained 2~3 levels with every difficult, successful deal so it was natural. Sid then indicated a horse and cart with a satisfied look.

“And I bought a carriage a short time ago.”

“Isn’t this a carriage given to the Continental Commerce Firm?”

“I used all my money to buy it. The most expected thing for a merchant is a carriage. If I use the carriage then the maintenance costs would be paid for by the Continental Commerce Firm. I’ll save the pennies for my own store in the future.”

Sid only held a handful of acorns but he had strong aspirations.

“Then I’ll give this to you and go. I have a lot of places to visit before returning. Ah!”

Sid suddenly remembered something and rummaged through a bag in his carriage. The item that appeared from the bag was an old harp.

“I accidentally received this harp during a trade a short time ago. Roco-nim, aren’t you a Minstrel? It didn’t know if you would need it so I just brought it. How is it? I don’t know that much about music instruments.”

Antique Harp
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It appears to have been neglected for a long time and using it in this state will just cause it to be broken. But a person with its discerning eyes will be able to see its true value. It has an elegant streamlined body and the optimal placement for a beautiful tune.

It must be the musical instrument which a great commander has poured his heart and soul into it. If the harp is used by ignorant people then it would be a waste of this masterpiece.

Just like described, the harp was very old. But Roco's heart was captured with one glance at the harp. When she changed to a minstrel, the harp was given as a quest reward so she had handled it for a short while. Compared to other musical instruments, it was quite heavy and expensive so she had changed to a different instrument. But there was a type of quaint charm to it, just like its name. She was particularly impressed with the image of a woman carved onto the handle part.

"This appeals to me!"

"I knew it."

Sid grinned and nodded.

"I bought it for 5 gold and was planning to sell it for 6 gold. But I'll give it to Roco-nim for 5 gold."

"Eh? That's so expensive. You want 5 gold for a worn-out and broken harp? I'll give you 2 gold for it."

"I won't go below 3 gold."

"Why are you doing this?" You said you bought it for 5 gold but weren't you somewhat cheated? Don't you think it is worth more of a discount?"

No free gifts existed in Ark's group. They followed the example of their leader Ark in which 'they would even pick up a stone and sell it!' That was the motto of the group! However, Roco and Sid saw each other every week so a heart-warming bargaining scene occurred.

"Phew, I understand. I'll give you a discount. Roco-nim is now formidable. 2 Gold 40 silver. I won't reduce it anymore."

"Okay."

The harp's price was knocked down to 2 gold and 40 silver.

"Sapjil, Ulmeok, put these goods into the warehouse and figure out the price for it."

"Yes Store Manager!"

Roco directed the store assistants and went up to the 2nd floor.

'Hmmm, there is no important work to do these days so it has been quite boring.'

In recent times, Roco had quite a lot of free time. She had only been busy when Ark was trying to reach his rental house deposit. However there was no need for that anymore and her education of Sapjil and Ulmeok was finished, causing them to tremble with fear and shudder at the sight of her. Although she was busy when there was a problem, she didn't have a lot of duties as the store manager. Roco was grateful for the free time at all. No, to be honest it caused her quite a lot of stress.

'I thought I would see Oppa more if I looked after the store but I see him even less than before. While I'm stuck here, that fox Lariette will look better.....ayu, I'm so irritated.'

Fortunately she checked with the rehabilitation members and it didn't seem like Lariette could meet Ark as well. But that wasn't the only cause of Roco's stress. When they met for the first time, Sid had bad credit but he was already level 300. In addition, Sapjil and Ulmeok's level also rose thanks to them being sale assistants. It was possible because they were merchants. However, Roco was a Minstrel. She received no experience no matter how much the business profited. Of course, Roco also played during that time. Sometimes she would go hunting with the former thieves or the Meow around the village. But there wasn't the same effect as when she was with the rehabilitation group so she still hadn't reached level 200.

"I'd like to play in Seutandal with the rehabilitation oppas too....."

But she couldn't leave Ark's store to Sapjil and Ulmeok.

"Yes, I'll just have to be patient and protect Oppa's business."

She used this thought to build her determination. Eventually Roco started a new hobby in order to appease her boredom. One of Roco's interests in reality that she could do in the game was handling multiple instruments. The store gathered quite a few japtem. Roco collected the musical instruments and set them aside in a special collection. Violin, viola, trumpet.....the 2nd floor was filled with Roco's musical instruments. Thanks to her boredom, she played them as soon as possible and her skilfulness became quite high.

'I don't have a harp yet so it will go quite well. It isn't possible to use as an equipment but won't a nice sound appear if I repair it? It is also beautiful so it can be used as a decoration. For the moment I'll have to spend time repairing it.'

Roco had a happy expression on her face as she picked up the dust cloth. Roco's specialty in reality and the game was housework. Thanks to her cleaning up the store, her various household skills have risen to advanced level. When Roco rubbed it with the dust cloth, the harp slowly regained its original brilliance and shine. Roco felt a sense of fulfilment every time more of the harp's features were revealed.

'My eyes weren't mistaken. It looks so beautiful with the original colour. Now what kind of tone will the harp make? Okay, next are the strings. I must quickly repair it in order to play the harp.'

Roco rode to the music store in Jackson and bought some strings. Once all the repairs were completed, Roco looked at the harp with an expectant face.

Ddi ddu ru rung ddi rung ddang-!

"Eh? What is that?"

Why did the harp sound like a brick was being ground up? Roco realized that she had forgotten one of the most important tasks in repairing an instrument. The most important task of string instruments was to adjust and tune each individual string.

"But I've never tuned a harp before....."

In fact, Roco had never done any tuning in New World. Most stores sold musical instruments with the tune already adjusted. Of course, Roco had done tuning before. But Roco mainly handled tuning acoustic guitars in reality. On the other hand, the harp had 47 strings to tune. Roco ended up visiting the instrument store in Jackson once again. However, the NPC looked at the harp and shook his head.

"I'm sorry but I don't know anything about the harp. Furthermore, the life of that harp seems to be finished. Even if it is adjusted, it will be difficult to get the right tone from it. How about you look in the store and find a new harp? A famous artisan has made it so the tone is very beautiful. And the functionality is also amazing. Come, look over here. Do you see the sharp metal in the corner? A monster can be damaged with this....."

The shop owner recommended her a steel harp with extra attack power.

"I'll come again!"

Since then, Roco had looked through various textbooks to tune the harp. Fortunately Roco was very interested in music, so she had good sound detection even if it wasn't perfect pitch. After a rewarding 10 days, she finally finished adjusting the harp.

"That's it! Now I can hear the tone of the harp properly."

Roco played the strings with a tense expression.

Ddiririring, ddiririring!

The 47 strings produced a soft, clear sound.

"This is it! This is the sound of a harp! Hohoho, this sounds better than my previous harp thanks to all the effort I put into repairing it. Shall I learn how to properly play a harp now? Where is it, that song I played before.....?"

Roco went to her box of sheet music.

Ddiririring ~ ddiririring ~ ddiririririririri ~.

Suddenly there was a poltergeist phenomenon.....why did the strings of the harp sitting on the table start to play by itself? That wasn't the only amazing part. The image of the woman carved into the handle opened her mouth and started to sing along. Roco hesitated as she looked at the harp. The room was filled with the sound of the harp and the singing..... Somehow the harp seemed like it was playing a beautiful, broken melody. It was an unfamiliar melody that she heard for the first time, but Roco quickly became a prisoner to that melody.

'Ah, it is the first time I've heard such a beautiful melody. It makes me feel a heartrending pain in my chest, like I'm sitting alone in a beautiful, mysterious forest. That's right, this is real healing music. My frustrated mind seems to be cleansed.'

Roco sat in front of the harp and became lost in its sound. Then there was a loud ringing sound and a quest information window appeared.

#### -Temptation of the Mysterious Music

You've accidentally obtained an old harp. Although the harp was impossible to use, you who loves music repaired the harp and gave it a new life. The harp then played a mysterious song like it was trying to repay your efforts. The contents of the song are about the tragic life of a genius musician. When the song ended, the woman carved on the harp seems to be vaguely staring somewhere.

It is the Melody Hill where the genius musician used to spend all his time. The harp

seems eager to show its new owner to its previous owner who met a tragic end.

<Difficulty: B Quest Restriction: Minstrel>

"Eh? A quest? Then this harp is the starting item for a quest?"

Roco read the information window with shocked eyes.

"If it is the Melody Hill than it isn't far away."

Roco checked the map and accepted the quest without really thinking about it. She was curious about the quest that appeared after she repaired the harp and heard the incomplete melody. If she arrived at the destination with the harp then she might be able to hear the rest of the song. In addition, she could take the Unicorn so it wouldn't take more than 1 hour to get there.

"Okay, Unicorn!"

Hihihing! Hihihing!

The unicorn snorted and quickly arrived at Melody Hill. It was a hill overlooking the village of Harukon. When she explored the hill while riding the unicorn, she saw a simple tombstone surrounded by flowers. When Roco approached the tombstone, the harp shook and instantly showed a reaction. But that was all it did.

"What the? Do I have to play it directly?"

The harp's strings moved like that was the answer. Roco thought she would hear the rest of the song so she was quite disappointed. But she came all the way here so shouldn't she complete the quest?

"What kind of song do I need to play?"

Actually there was no need to worry. Roco only knew how to play one song on the harp. It was the harp sheet music she received when she changed into a minstrel. Just like a magician learned magic through magic scrolls, a minstrel learned how to play the instrument from sheet music related to it. The magic depended on the skilfulness with that instrument and the percentage of completion when playing the song. Unlike a magician, a minstrel could create their own songs once the degree of skilfulness has risen enough. However, Roco's harp playing skill was still inferior. She was apprehensive but the tune played to some degree when she concentrated. Roco played the harp seriously when something happened.

*-Ugh, stop, stop! I won't accept such abominable playing!*

The sculpture image on the harp seemed to raise its voice angrily. Roco became startled and stopped her performance while looking at the harp.

*-It is not the harp. It's me. Hey, what the? Raise your head. Over here.*

When she raised her head with confusion, a long haired, middle aged person floated from the tombstone.

"W-who are you?"

*-Me? I am Melody. The master of the harp. No, the former owner?*

"Huh? But I thought you were dead?"

*-I'll explain it to you. Damn, I can't say it directly or through the harp. Hah, I've lived all of my life for music and now I can't even talk about the purpose of the harp..... It's so regrettable, just imagining the way I died is so vexing. I want to cry. I'm going to cry. I'm so sad.*

Roco gaped at Melody as he blew his nose. It was a look which asked why it was regrettable. Frankly, Roco had no interest in the complaints of the ghost. There was a saying that said there were no light graves. And the person was already dead so what was the point of hearing their complaints? But she had to ask or else the quest might not progress.

"What is the matter?"

*-It's so sad and regrettable that I don't want to explain but I will.*

Melody shamelessly confessed his circumstances. He was born in a family which produced many famous musicians through the generations. But he had no great talent unlike his brothers. He suffered from harsh mistreatment throughout his life until he decided to climb up a mountain. While he remained on this mountain, he practiced playing an instrument until he obtained skills that would even amaze his brothers.

*-So with the harp in my pocket, I climbed the mountain and spent 15 years here training. I made an effort to reach the state where no one could imitate my skills. Huhuhu, maybe I really was a genius. And finally the day came. The first step into the world after transforming into a genius musician!*

"So did you surprise your brothers?"

Melody flinched and sighed before murmuring.

—.....A cliff.

"Huh? A cliff? What?"

*-Damn, it was a cliff. The first step I took into the world was off a cliff!*

Roco's eyes flickered before she finally understood his words. Melody had spent 15 years training to produce a heavenly sound. While heading down the mountain, he fell off a cliff and died. She didn't know whether to laugh or cry at his story.

*-It is so regrettable that I can't close my eyes even after I died. But if someone gives a satisfactory performance on my harp then I might be able to relax and close my eyes.*

Melody murmured in a melancholy voice until he suddenly raised his voice.

*-Ugh, but the person who appeared after a few decades holding my harp is this woman. I can't possibly accept this. Are you really a minstrel? How did you make the harp produce a sound like an ogre? Are you a magician not a minstrel?*

"What, what the? All I did was visit and play!"

*-Play? You call that playing? It's just noise! I woke up quickly thanks to that noise. Huh? I would've rather slept than be woken up by you!*

"Why should I care about a stupid ghost who dived off a cliff and died?"

Roco exploded and started packing her bags.

*-What? What did you say? What, diving? My pride can't accept a person who makes such noises with my harp. That harp is a heirloom of my family. If you don't know how to play it then give the harp back!*

"I don't want to. It was quite expensive repairing this. I have no intention of listening to your word."

Roco stood up with a sulky face. Then Melody looked confused and hurriedly exclaimed.

*-W-wait a minute. Didn't you hear me? I can't fall asleep again without the harp. Only the expert performance of the harp will make my go to sleep. Why don't you sit down?*

"Whether you fall asleep has nothing to do with me. Because I am a minstrel who can't play the harp that well. Anyway, the owner of this harp is me. It might seem unfair but I won't let you take it from me. Do you understand?"

*-Okay. Then I'll do this.*

Melody was distressed for a while before he made a suggestion.

*-To be honest, I'm not in the mood for this but there's nothing else I can do Starting from today, I will teach you how to play the harp. If a genius musician teaches you then your body will get the hang of it in no time. Huhuhu, how about it? This seems like a strange fate. You won't receive many opportunities to be taught by a great musician like me. It is a reward for repairing my harp.*

"Bah, I have no interest in a teacher who will harass me because I am a woman. Let's go Unicorn."

Roco snorted and disappeared like the wind on the unicorn. The Melody shouted with a desperate voice.

*-What the? You're still a novice so you're incredibly lucky to have a chance to be tutored by me. Hey, wait! Just hear me out. I wanted to say.....please have a look! Okay, okay. I won't call you 'Woman' anymore. So please come back! Come back! Come back! Gone? Are you really gone? Sob, what will I do now.....?*

".....Roco."

Roco muttered while walking out of the woods. Melody wiped his tears while he stuttered.

*-Eh? Eh eh? Ah, didn't you leave?*

"I couldn't do it. You woke up because of me. If you say my name properly then I'll agree to be your student. I also want to hear the harp played well. If I'm your student then won't I be able to learn the song the harp played?"

*-Of course. I composed that song. Oh, you are actually a good woman. Thank you, I'll teach you anything you want. So please put me to sleep quickly. That is my only wish. Isn't it simple?*

"I understand. I'm going to try."

Thus Roco became a student of a ghost and started to engage in fully fledged music studies.

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Dazzling lights which stung the eyes and a noisy roaring sound which resounded through the ears. It seemed so different from the ordinary everyday life that it

seemed like an alien space. In the night, it was a space where the colourful lights lured in humans off the streets. Those who stepped into these places would return back to their primal natures. However, the only people who could enter this place were the ones selected.

It wasn't based on data but was restricted by the age or clothes of the person. The people who failed the horrible screening test would sob and wail about discrimination! The name of this modern day pandemonium.....was the place which was just called 'Club.'

"Hahaha! Hey, three bottles of alcohol and some appetizers! Quickly!"

A loud voice was audible from the room overlooking the main stage. Then the young woman flanking him sent him flirtatious looks.

"Oppa is so cool. I like it."

"But isn't that much slightly unreasonable?"

"What? Is this a joke? Do you know who I am? A few bottles of liquor won't make any dent in my bank account. Order anything you like. Today I will pay for everything. No, I'm in a good mood so I'm ringing this golden bell after a long time."

The one smirking with a red face was Lee Myung-ban, also known as Andel who once sought to step on Ark in New World. But that was just inside a game in the end. In reality, Andel was the son of an upper class family. Andel waved his hand that was holding jewel encrusted watches and the women made a fuss.

"Come, this golden bell will only ring once."

"It's great that Oppa is ringing the golden bell."

"Heh, I won't play with any losers. Okay, you guys have made today merry so I'll ring the golden bell. Huhuhu, do you want to play the King game?"

"Omo, shall we do that?"

"Oppa, aren't you being too blatant?"

"Hahaha, every man is a wolf. Don't you know that yet?"

Andel smirked and stroke a girl's face. Then the door to the room opened and a testy voice was heard.

"You're quite fortunate."

“What the? Who dared come in.....?”

Andel checked the face of the young man and flinched.

“Ah, Alan? “You, how are you here.....?”

“I know what type of places you go to.”

The person who appeared was Alan who Andel had known for 10 years. When Alan sat down, the girls’ eyes quickly focused on him. Alan was dressed plainly. It was just jeans and a white t-shirt. But it seemed more luxurious than the shirts embellished with decorations that Andel was wearing. In other words..... Andel suddenly seemed like a commoner after Alan who gave off a noble impression appeared. Their levels were completely different.

“Wah, this Oppa is cool.”

“That’s right, he’s my ideal type.”

Andel became dissatisfied with the women’s reactions to Alan. Andel and Alan had known each other for 10 years but these days their relationship was estranged. That’s because of Ark. It was because Andel was tricked by Ark that Alan had Silvana taken away from him. Of course, Andel knew how much Alan had poured into Silvana. So he had decided to avoid Alan until he became less upset but his thoughts changed after a while.

‘It’s only a game. Why should I have to ignore a friend of 10 years?’

“Alan, why did you come to see me?”

Of course, the voice coming out of his mouth wasn’t sentimental. Alan looked at Andel before suddenly saying.

“You’re not connecting to New World these days?”

“What the? Are you still holding onto that thing? I don’t care anymore. I only took the test to enter Global Exos because I thought I should pretend to do some work. But I don’t want anything to do with that test anymore. Don’t you feel the same way?”

“So your interest in New World really disappeared?”

When Alan asked sharply, Andel held his tongue. At first Andel had played the game more aggressively than Alan. Like he said, Andel wasn’t very interested in joining Global Exos. He stayed up all night to play the game was because it was fun. And the reason he hadn’t connected to the game..... Then Alan took out an MP

Movie Player. Andel's face wrinkled as he watched the video. The video shown on the MP Player was something that had previously aired on TV. The protagonist of the video was a black wolf who Andel recognized with one glance.

"Ah, that Ark bastard.....!"

Yes, it was indeed him. The reason Andel wasn't connecting to the game. Every time he connected to the game, he remembered the humiliation he suffered from Ark and couldn't stand it. His organization was shattered by Ark and collapsed. Then Alan became angry at him so he abandoned the game. Alan immediately started to talk again.

"Are you really okay with this?"

"What?"

"That Ark. He destroyed everything we built. Now he had this success. Are you really going to act like this? You're able to forgive him? Was your personality that good-natured? I couldn't do it. My chest burns at the thought of leaving that guy alone."

"Damn, I'm also angry. But that's it."

"I heard about it. Didn't you suffer because of that person?"

"Yes, do you know how broken I was because of that?"

"Yet you're just going to leave it as it is."

"I know, I know. I also prefer to step on him. Honestly, I've already seen that movie. Do you know how long I was furious? But he is not the same Ark. His level and power has increased a lot. It will be difficult to take care of him."

"No, you have to remember that it is a game. I have a way."

Alan replied in a firm tone.

"I'm also not interested in the test. But I can never ignore that guy. I'll go after him no matter what. Whether it is reality or the game."

Alan's words were true. In all the time Alan had lived, he had never been so disregarded by another person. No, it wasn't exactly true to say he was disregarded. Once again, Alan was rich. In addition he was smart. If someone disregarded him, Alan never hesitated to use all his weapons to step on them and he never failed. The only blot on his undefeated record was Ark. When seen objectively,

his failure to defeat Ark was the one shame of Alan's whole life. It was like a hole in his ego. It was a small hole, but his ego was so strong that even a small hole would annoy him. The only way to fill up that hole was to utterly destroy Ark in New World.

Yes, that was where his intense hatred of Ark stemmed from. Andel clenched his fist firmly and nodded at Alan's words.

"The same goes for me. I'll do whatever it takes! I've never been so insulted by another person. But it's not as easy as it sounds. At least in the game."

"Yes, I have to admit that. He isn't as simple as I thought he was. That's why it's even more insufferable. Now New World isn't just a game that I am playing for fun. I'll risk everything to erase him from New World. So I require your help."

"What? My help?"

"Yes, I've only been thinking about revenge against Ark so I've been raising my power. I'm confident now after increasing my strength. But like you said, he's not the same opponent as before. Yes, it's not time yet. I have to wait a little bit more before I appear in front of him. So you should do some preparations."

"Why is my help necessary.....?"

"You have to gather people. That kind of force is needed if we want to defeat Ark and his group. We don't need people like the ones in 'Dawn Blade.' Chaotic players are good. We need players who will obey our orders. But.....I can't explain why but I can't do that task. So I was hoping to leave it to you."

"I'm still only level 200. Will they listen to me?"

Andel asked with a grumpy expression.

"We have a weapon against them."

"Weapon? A weapon....."

Alan pulled something out and showed it to Andel. It was a passbook. The women who looked at the passbook screamed.

"Kyaaa! How many 0's is that?"

"I obtained this for the club a few months ago. What it New World? Shall we create a new club?"

Andel stared at Alan with a dumb expression.

".....This amount isn't easy even for you.....can I really use it?"

"I don't care as long as we step on that guy. No, honestly I think this much is lacking for the scale of the organization that I desire. But if I receive the help of a friend then it is possible. How about it? Will you help me?"

Andel hesitated with a complicated expression. But after a moment, he grabbed Alan's hand and nodded.

"Okay, you and I will step on that bastard. If you have this much determination then I'll also try my best. Money isn't easy to raise but you've managed to prepare this much. It is like an investment. If we abandon our principles then we can step on him and occupy New World. Is that why you prepared the money?"

"As expected, you've understood my real intentions."

"Heh, I did spend 3 years at a private school with you."

"Then you've decided?"

"Yes, I'll believe in you and use the weapon you've prepared to gather amazing people."

"Okay, I'll trust you and leave it to you. But you should keep one thing in mind. Like we said earlier, he isn't an easy opponent to deal with. You must not move until I've finished preparing everything."

"How many times have I faced him? I know that guy better than anyone. Rest assured that I'll never make the same mistake. Huhuhu, I can't wait a couple of months or even 1 year if it means I get my revenge."

"It's only once. It will only take one instance for everything to be ruined."

"Okay, I understand. I'll endure it. It's just a game. I'll wait until things are prepared."

Andel drained the remaining alcohol and stood up.

"Now is the time. Okay, let's go New World!"

"Oppa, the golden bell?"

"Noisy, I don't have that money anymore! You buy your own things!"

Andel screamed and exited the room. So after a closed room meeting with Alan, Andel once again returned to the stage of New World. Andel's strongest weapon was money.

## Act 8: Underground Crypt

"Ark-nim, right, right!"

The eyeballs floating in the sky screamed. Ark reflexively turned and saw the huge axe heading towards him.

"Heok, Jump!"

Ark used Wolf's Feet to quickly move his body 10 metres. The axe blade lost its target and slammed several metres into the wall. If it hit his defense then he would've been split in half. But he could barely breathe a sigh of relief before he heard a terrible sound.

Cheolkodong, cheolkodong. Syusyusyusyusyu!

It was the mechanical sound of something operating! Hundreds of holes opened in the nearby wall and a shower of arrows shot out.

"Dark Dance!"

Ark continuously rotated his body and danced to avoid the arrows. No matter how much he used Dark Dance, he couldn't avoid the damage of hundreds of flying arrows. Tutututung. Around 10 arrows stuck in his shoulders, chest and legs and he lost a lot of health. But his health being decreased wasn't the problem.

-You've been hit by a blunt arrow 40 damage!

<The special 'push' effect of the arrow is applied>

The arrow Ark was hit with had a 'blunt' attribute. Thanks to his resilience stat, he only received 40 damage per shot. However, he had no resistance against 'push' so he was pushed back in rapid succession. Razak screamed as Ark was pushed back.

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

The place Ark was heading to was a pitfall filled with sharp blades. If Ark fell in then he would end up like a porcupine. The arrow trap and the other traps were all carefully calculated.

“Racard, Dark Dash!”

“I’m going. Ohhhhhhh!”

Racard’s body flew across the space and forcefully slammed into Ark. When hit by Dark Dash, Ark was instantly thrown several metres. Ark used Mind’s Eye but saw that he wasn’t out of the range of pitfalls yet. Then Razak plunged into the arrow trap. He blocked the arrows with his shield and jumped towards Ark. Ark was startled to see Razak and soon noticed his intentions.

“Well done, Razak. Sword transformation!”

Razak changed into the Saw Blade after Ark shouted and was caught. Ark changed him into the whip and wrapped it around a nearby pillar. Then Ark pulled himself towards the pillar using the whip. Fortunately he managed to avoid the trap but there weren’t any safe places. As soon as his feet touched the ground, Ark heard a mechanical sound and walls on either side started moving forwards.

‘There’s no place to avoid the trap on the left or the right. If that’s the case.....!’

After quickly judging the situation, Ark acted like a ninja and jumped between both walls to propel him to the top. Fortunately he managed to get away but he was still being threatened by traps.

‘Damn, where is it? Where on earth is it? I don’t have much health left now.....!’

Ark moved his body and carefully looked around. Then he saw something glistening in the darkness. After avoiding the blades and concentrating his eyes, he saw a glass bead that was lodged inside a hole in the wall. Ark frowned as he confirmed it.

‘It is too far away. How am I going to get it when it is hidden in such a difficult place? The distance is too far. And it is so deeply lodged in the wall that my hand won’t reach it. What should I do? If I hesitate then the traps will just get worse.....!’

Ark contemplated for a moment before raising his head and shouting.

“Buksil, come here!”

“Huh? W-why?”

“Just come, this time it is an eyeball missile!”

When the eyeball approached him, Ark turned and did an overhead kick.

“Eeeeeek!”

The eyeball screamed as it flew forward. The goal was the hole in the wall. When Buksil impacted with it, the glass bead shook and fell. At the same time, the numerous blades, rocks and arrows flying towards Ark stopped. The message window he was waiting for then appeared.

-You have operated the switch and turned off all the traps!

Ark sighed and sat down.

“Phew, I thought I would really die this time.”

His whole body was drenched with sweat after running around without stopping for 10 minutes. Ark wiped off the sweat and murmured in an irate voice.

“Damn, what kind of dungeon is this?”

Yesterday Ark had entered the underground crypt. It wasn't necessary to explain again but Ark had prepared thoroughly before entering the dungeon. He checked his equipment and ingredients and entered expecting fierce battles. However, the underground crypt was different from what he imagined. It was a secret dungeon located in the City of the Dead. Ark was expecting sleeping corpses to jump up and attack him. But the corpses in this place hadn't budged no matter where he moved to. Instead, Ark was attacked with a large numbers of traps just like an Indiana Jones movie. He couldn't breathe without activating pitfalls and traps.....! Ark wandered the border between life and death many times.

‘In the beginning it was arrows and poison needles.....’

The further he went into the crypt, the more difficult the traps became. If he had been hit by the flying axe then he would've lost 50% of his health. But that was its charm. If he had been stuck between a wall when it appeared then it would've been instantaneous death! In other words, defense or attack was no help in this dungeon. It was thanks to his improvisation combined with his movements that he was still alive.

‘I never could've come this far if I hadn't discovered the method to turn the traps off.’

Fortunately there was a way to disable the traps. Whenever a trap was triggered, there was always a glass bead in the area which functioned as the switch. Removing the glass bead would stop the operation of the traps. However, avoiding the

relentless traps and finding the hidden bead wasn't that easy. It was thanks to Buksil's eyeballs that he managed to find the glass beads. Because Vampire's Eye wasn't affected by darkness, it could move freely through small holes to find the bead. Well, this time he had another use for it.....

"Ark-nim!"

The eyeball had become red after striking the glass bead and it flew angrily towards him. Ark pretended ignorance and said.

"Ah Buksil. Good work. I'm alive thanks to you."

"Now you're saying this? What were you thinking? This is my eyes, my eyes!"

"Then you should've found the glass bead more quickly. You found it too late so the traps became worse. Therefore it was inevitable. And isn't it wonderful? Eyeball missile. Don't you think it is an upgrade from the pig missile? Are you going to weaponize every part of your body? Buksil, the living weapon! How wonderful."

"Eh? That is a little cool.....ah, no, what was it?"

The eyeball paused and murmured. The two eyes rubbed against each other and dust fell down. It was a really pitiful scene.

"Anyway, the traps have been turned off so shall we check the loot?"

Ark murmured and got up. The crypt didn't have any monsters. However, there was a chance to collect items that could be called loot after the traps were switched off.

'Let's see, is there anything slightly useful this time?'

Ark approached the wall with an expectant look. Just like a medieval movie, a wall in the crypt was made like the honeycomb in a bee hive. And a corpse that looked like a mummy was enshrined in the wall. Ark collected the items present on the body.

Old Sword

Weapon type: One-handed sword

Attack: 7~10

Durability: 17/200

Weight: 45

User restriction: Level 250

The sword buried with ancient warriors in the underground crypt. In the past it possessed tremendous power but that feature has already been lost. The iron has oxidized and it cannot be melted down in a furnace.

‘Damn, another bad item?’

Ark sighed after he saw the information window. The crypt had a lot of weapons and defensive items buried. However, the performance of those items were so bad that it was no different from a pile of trash. Would he only be able to get the price of the scrap metal? Although it was an item that could still be used, he would only be able to get a few coppers for it. No, Ark couldn’t ignore a dropped item even if he would get no money for it. Racard looked at its appearance with an uncomfortable expression.

“Master, no matter how you look at it.....”

“Don’t tell me, I know.”

He knew what Racard was trying to say. He entered the underground crypt and suffered through the traps just for a few scrape items. Wasn’t this just grave robbing? His face turned red at the thought of Buksil filming it. However, Ark wasn’t going to give up any items. The world famous archaeologist Indiana Jones was also famous for being a grave robber. Well.....he had a wide viewpoint.

‘Yes, what is so bad about recycling items that the dead won’t use anyway? It is a time where there is a shortage of raw materials. Recycling will contribute to humans.’

That was how Ark mentally armed himself.

‘But the income compared to the amount of effort is really enough to cause tears. I can’t gain any levels because there are no monsters and all I can obtain is just a pile of junk? If it wasn’t for my class change quest then I would never bother with this dungeon.....’

However, he wouldn’t let his heart make hasty decisions. It was an extremely difficult dungeon! If he made just one mistake then the traps scattered everywhere would kill him. In addition, this dungeon was the type where the traps would reset if he died and had to enter the dungeon again. If he had to break through the traps again from the beginning then he would go mad.

‘Anyway, I believe this is the last area based on what I recall from the map.

Ark collected all the items and opened his map. The topographic map of the complicated underground crypt was already almost cleared. When he looked using his cartography skills, the map completion rate was 95%. There was only 5% left to be completed. And Ark already knew where the remaining 5% was hidden. In fact, Ark initially had no intention of exploring the crypt to 100%. He had planned to use the shortest route to his destination. After going the wrong way a few times, Ark’s completion rate was 60% when he reached the destination. It was a huge door with a sentence written on it! It was obviously the final destination of the dungeon just by looking at it. But there was a problem he hadn’t expected.....the door was locked.

“How on earth am I going to open this?”

Ark was filled with anxiety. Suddenly the eyeball floating all over the place discovered something on the top of the opposite wall.

“Ark-nim, there is something recorded here.”

*If you would like to meet the owner of this place then insert the tokens of courage and wisdom.*

‘Tokens of courage and wisdom?’

Ark looked carefully at the iron door. Although thick dust was piled up, he carefully examined the formation carved into the wall. There were small holes forming a circle. Ark determined the size of the holes and immediately knew the meaning of the sentence.

‘That’s right. The token of courage and wisdom. Damn, does this mean I have to completely go around the dungeon?’

The tokens of courage and wisdom didn’t involve monsters. That’s right, it was to pass through all the traps in the dungeon. Only passing through the traps could he get the glass bead. The key to opening the iron door was the beads. Furthermore, there were thirty holes carved. In other words, he needed at least 30 beads. Ark only gathered the required number of beads after exploring 95% of the crypt. Well, thanks to that he became enough of an expert to rival Indiana Jones.....

“Now the final destination is close. Let’s go!”

Ark finished his maintenance and headed towards the iron door. Then he laid the glass beads in one by one.

Ku ku ku ku ku.....!

The iron door started vibrating as soon as he finished putting the beads in and the door slid to the side to reveal a hidden passage. It was a straight passage that headed downwards.

"Finally, I've reached the final stage of the profession quest."

Ark jumped in with an expectant expression. How far did he go? He went all the way down until he suddenly heard a voice muttering.

"Damn it! That brat.....how much longer.....will it hold out?"

'Eh? That voice?'

Ark flinched and stopped moving before he used Eyes of the Cat. There was a wide space at the end of the passage and a dark shadow was wandering there. It looked like one of the dead but it was covered head and toe with what seemed to be black paint. It was to the extent that he couldn't see through the black with Eyes of the Cat.

"There's only the shell left..... I'll kill it this time.....! When that is done.....I'll become a complete existence....."

The black person muttered as he walked around before he suddenly flinched and turned his head. He became surprised as he saw Ark and confronted him.

"Yes, who are you?"

The person looked at Ark with uneasy eyes until he suddenly shouted like he remembered something.

"I see..... You covet that as well..... Foolish bastards..... Your vain greed.....I won't allow it!"

Sharp fangs suddenly sprang from his mouth and blade like claws from the hand. A red warning message flashed as the person attacked.

-The boss monster 'Karma' who has a corrupted soul has appeared.

'Boss monster? This crypt also has a boss monster?'

There were no monsters present so he hadn't expected a boss. Ark was unprepared and hurriedly pulled out his sword to attack Karma. It was a crude attack so he hadn't expected it to work. But Karma fell down from the hit and also lost 3% of his health.

‘What the? This guy?’

Ark looked at Karma struggling on the ground with astonishment. Shouldn’t the boss monster be incredibly strong?

‘That’s right, there were no monsters here so I had no idea of the level of difficulty in this dungeon. The difficulty of the traps is quite high but that has nothing to do with the level of dungeon. This isn’t this dungeon more reasonable than I expected?’

He confirmed that it was the right answer after checking Karma with Eyes of the Cat. Indeed, Ark was high level. He had reached level 339 after killing the zombies in the swamp. If he added the 50% dark attribute bonus then he was level 508. On the other hand, Karma was only level 450. Even though he was a boss monster, Ark had already overwhelmed it in stats. It wasn’t necessary for him to fight really seriously against it. Of course, bosses in New World possessed special skills so victory or defeat wasn’t just determined by level.

‘But what’s this? This uncomfortable feeling?’

Instead of feeling comfortable at the thought of an easy fight, he felt uneasy instead. If the boss was that weak then wouldn’t the loot be bad as well? But Ark clamped down on the uncomfortable feeling. Anyway, he hadn’t entered hoping for loot. Ark’s purpose was his profession change quest!

‘I’ll finish this quickly and complete my quest!’

“Dark blade!”

Ark ran up to Karma and stabbed him with his sword. Then Karma screamed and waved his hand.

“Hik, Time Acceleration!”

-The durability of Gwisal’s sword had fallen has quickly fallen.

<Durability -10>

-The durability of Gwisal’s sword had fallen has quickly fallen.

<Durability -10>

-The durability of Gwisal’s sword had fallen has quickly fallen.

<Durability -10>

A suspicious gas had emerged from Karma's hand. At that moment, a message window appeared saying that Gwisal's durability had fallen?

'Hik, w-what it this?'

Ark panicked and withdrew. Before coming here, he had carefully looked at Gwisal's information window and the durability had dropped from 200 to 80. Ark avoided Karma's ensuing attacks and used Magic Restoration continuously to repair Gwisal's sword.

"What on earth is happening? I didn't even touch the black person? What is this thing?"

Ark used Skill Penetration. It was urgent to examine what Karma had done.

-Karma's special skill: Time Tuner

Thanks to his spirit body which is close to nature, Karma uses techniques which deal with time. This technique allows several decades to pass in seconds or revert to the past.

However, this technique does not work on existences that have life.

**【Time Acceleration】** Speed up the passage of time within a certain space. When time is accelerated at maximum speed, all objects within the area (sword, armour etc.) will have their durability fall.

**【Time Rewind】** The passage of time within a certain area is reverted to the past. When affected, all objects will return to its previous state. However, this skill only works up to the time when the object is created (when applied to equipment, the item will return to its ore state).

'What the? Time Tuner?'

Techniques which controlled the flow of time? Although it didn't apply to Ark since he was alive, Time Rewind wasn't something that he could take lightly. Ark turned pale with fear after reading the information window. Although it wasn't necessary to explain, real physical laws applied to equipment in New World. If he didn't use his sword over a certain amount of time then the durability would decline. Of course, it only decreased by 1 every month and repairing it would always return it to the original state. But if he left the equipment alone after a few years then the durability would fall and the item would break. Karma's skill acted like that. When his sword entered the space, it was like time accelerated by a hundred times. In the end, it appeared like Ark had neglected his sword for a few years. The durability was decreased at a tremendous rate. If his response was a little bit late then his sword

would've been destroyed. It wasn't only his sword. Wouldn't the effect also apply to his armour if it hit his body?

'I have to fight against someone like this?'

He would've preferred to lose 1,000 health. If he died then he would just lost a few stats when resurrected. However, his items were unrecoverable if the durability reached 0. In addition, 70% of his equipment was rare or higher so it would cost 1 billion won buying new equipment. If that happened that Ark would become sick and collapse.

'Close range fighting is dangerous. My pets are wearing equipment so it is also risky for them.'

"Razak and Racard, quickly retreat!"

Ark panicked and used Sprint to retreat.

"Huhuhu, where did your confidence go.....you cowardly bastard!"

When Ark retreated, Karma instantly used taunts to provoke him. However, Ark wasn't the type to risk losing millions of won just because of a few taunts.

'He's provoking me so Time Tuner isn't a long distance magic.'

While being chased by Karma, Ark started analyzing him. The radius of Karma's skill was probably a few metres around him. If he didn't approach then he wouldn't have to worry about his equipment breaking. And Karma used skills like a magician so his defense and health were extremely low.

'If I keep my distance while dealing strong damage then I might be able to fix this.'

"Radun, give me a sword! Blade Storm!"

Ark took out a sword and made it explode. It split into countless fragments and attacked Karma. But something astonishing happened in the next moment.

"Time Rewind!"

After Karma used his magic, the fragments combined back into a sword and weakly fell to the ground. Thanks to time rewinding, the sword had returned to its previous state before it exploded. It was an absurd defense. This also happened when he tried to shoot an arrow. When Karma rewound time, the arrow lost its acceleration and fell to the ground. Karma then rushed towards him.

"Hahaha! You greedy bastard.....I'll strip you naked..... Time Acceleration!"

Damn, what is there? There's no way to fight!

Ark was like someone with his tail trapped. He was confident in a frontal confrontation. But if he fought within close range then time acceleration would be applied to his equipment. Even if he continuously used Magic Restoration, at least one or two of his equipment would be destroyed before he could repair them.

'That absolutely can't happen! The equipment I worked so hard to obtain.....!'

He couldn't tolerate it, even if it meant he had to die.

'Is there a way to block his skill?'

Ark worried for a while before a thought flashed through his head. Karma's skills were Time Acceleration and Time Rewind. In other words, they were magic with completely opposite properties! What would happen if Time Rewind was applied to an area which already had Time Acceleration? Wouldn't it be neutralized?

'Yes, that's it! That's the only way.'

"Racard, take it off!"

"Eh?"

Racard's eyes widened at Ark's words.

"M-master, since when is that your hobby.....I'm a handsome boy but....in this situation....."

"What nonsense are you saying? You're wearing rare equipment. You should take it off so it isn't destroyed."

"Ah, is that so? But why? Heok, don't tell me you're making me fight against another tough person?"

"Don't worry, I don't expect that from you."

Ark snorted and murmured. Although Racard could fight Karma once he took off his equipment, he wouldn't be able to defeat the boss on his own. No matter how weak, he was still a boss. Karma wasn't so weak that Ark could defeat him without his equipment. So Ark wanted Racard to use Blood-sucking. It was in order to absorb a skill that would neutralize Karma's.

“Got it? I’ll attract his attention while you suck out his skills. The skill I desire is Time Acceleration. Fill your two slots with Time Acceleration.”

There was a reason Ark wanted Time Acceleration. Karma didn’t know that Racard could absorb skills. If he knew that fact then he wouldn’t let Racard suck his blood easily. Then this was the only chance to use blood-sucking. So he had to defeat Karma with only two skills.

‘The skill that can deal the largest damage is Blade Storm. In addition, the attack damage is determined by the quality of the sword. My counterattack made him lose 3% health last time so two hits with Blade Storm should be enough.’

Then he would be in a critical condition. With less than 10% health, Ark could rush forward and attack while continuously using Magic Restoration. A magic sword was the best bet for this.

‘That guy stopped my attack with Time Rewind just now. Time Acceleration means that a lot of time can pass within a few seconds. I have to kill him before durability reached 0.’

That’s why Ark ordered the acquisition of Time Acceleration which is the opposite of Time Rewind.

“Okay, I don’t know if I could acquire it but I’ll try.”

Racard sneaked out of the combat zone and took off his tuxedo before approaching Karma. Meanwhile Ark shot arrows wildly and attracted Karma’s eyes.

“Take this you damn monster!”

“These attacks....are useless! Ah, ouch!”

Karma flinched and looked down at his foot. Racard had quickly bit the ankle and sucked the blood before running away.

“Damn, the taste is dirty. This isn’t blood.....it tastes like rotten soup.....”

-Racard has used Blood-sucking on Karma.

A new skill has been saved in the empty slot.

\* Currently absorbed skill: <Time Acceleration> You can accelerate time within a certain space.

‘Okay, that’s one!’

Even though he complained, Racard managed to collect one skill.

“Jeez.....this mosquito like guy....!”

Karma rushed up to Racard angrily. However, Racard avoided the attack like he really was a mosquito. When Ark shot an arrow, Karma instantly turned back to him. Karma still didn’t know that Racard was absorbing his skills. Racard wasn’t dealing any damage to his health so he hadn’t considered it necessary to pay attention to Racard.

‘Now Racard! Time Acceleration!’

“Okay!”

Racard sucked on Karma’s neck like a mosquito at Ark’s command. After a few repetitions, Racard was once again able to absorb a skill. However Ark sighed after checking Racard’s information window. It wasn’t Time Acceleration that was absorbed but Time Rewind.

‘Damn, you’ll have to cancel it and suck again!’

“U-understood. Eh? B-but Master.....this is slightly strange.”

Racard who was running away from Karma suddenly frowned. In a short while, Racard suddenly screamed and rolled around on the ground.

“Aaaaak! M-Master. I-it hurts! It feels like I’m being eaten!”

“R-Racard, wake up! Razak, protect Racard!”

Ttadak, clack clack clack clack!

Razak who had retreated at Ark’s command ran towards Racard. But after his scream was heard, an information window appeared in front of Ark.

-Your summon Racard has manifested a new vampire ability.

Racard has awoken one of the abilities obtained when he became an Earl after defeating Karakul. With two skills of the same nature saved in the slot, Racard has learned ‘Skill synthesis.’ ‘Skill synthesis’ has the ability to combine the two skills to make another one. When the two skills with different properties are synthesized, it will evolve one step higher.

-Skill Synthesis: Two saved skills are combined into one.

\* Skill currently synthesized in the body:

<Absolute Time> Absolute Time is able to invalidate all time magic in the surroundings for 10 minutes.

‘Skill synthesis?’

Ark’s mouth dropped as he read the information window. Wasn’t it like eating meat and spice separately, but then mixing it for delicious food? Combining Time Acceleration and Time Rewind created Absolute Time! The two effects mixed and created a skill that destroyed time magic. If he had sucked Time Acceleration twice then he never would’ve awakened the vampire’s abilities! If Absolute Time was able to destroy time magic then Karma wouldn’t be a problem anymore.

“Good! This is it!”

“Ugh, I didn’t know it would feel that bad. Please use it quickly. Ouch!”

Racard muttered as he still hadn’t adapted to the nausea from awakening his ability.

“Yes, very soon.....”

Ark immediately prepared a counterattack. Now it was possible to finish Karma off whenever he wanted. Before he had only thought about escaping but now he had a brilliant idea.

‘Wait? That fellow stops all flying attacks with Time Rewind. And Time Rewind returned the moment to hundreds of years ago. ‘Then perhaps.....?’

“Radun, the Old Sword!”

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

As soon as Radun gave him the sword, Ark threw it towards Karma.

“Bah.....Time Rewind!”

Karma judged that it was an attack and turned back time. Of course, the sword lost its energy and fell to the ground. But the sword which fell to the ground was different from before. The Old Sword he picked up in the crypt was literally an old sword. What would happen if it was hit with Time Rewind?

‘As expected!’

Ark quickly reclaimed the Old Sword and looked at the information window.

Ancient Sword

Weapon type: One-handed sword

Attack: 20~22

Durability: 200/200

Weight: 45

User Restriction: Level 250

The sword buried with ancient warriors in the underground crypt. The basic equipment of the infantry, it is a lightweight and reliably crafted sword. It is a sword within any decorations, making it easy to handle with a decent attack. This type of sword improves basic agility.

<Option: Agility +5>

Ark was in such a good mood he felt like screaming. Yes, hundreds of years ago the sword was in its perfect state. But it had been buried in the ground for hundreds of years and couldn't be used anymore. He had returned it when it was created for the first time. Ark intended to change all of the items he found in the crypt.

‘I found 30 items. I can change all of them into useful items!’

Ark hid his real intentions and muttered.

“Ugh, there is also a failure?”

“Hahaha! You fool.....Every attempt will be the same!”

“But there's still a lot of weapons. You can't stop everything. Take this!”

“You fool, didn't I say that was useless? Time Rewind! Time Rewind!”

Karma was a guy whose primary nature was protecting himself. Then couldn't Ark use that to change all the junk items to something new? Ark's only worry was that Karma would notice and start to use Time Acceleration. It would be fine with normal equipment but if Time Acceleration was used on old items then they would

turn to dust. However, Karma was tricked by Ark's act and kept on using Time Rewind.

'Hahaha, I'm sweeping in the money!'

Ark frantically threw the junk items.

"Take this, take this and this.....eh? This is?"

"Huk huk huk, already.....ran out of.....huk huk huk, of items."

Karma muttered as he gasped and Ark clicked his tongue.

"Yes, everything is gone. Unfortunately."

"Huhuhu! Huk huk huk, now it's your turn..... Huk huk huk, the items you're wearing.....huk huk huk, I'll turn it to dust..... Huk huk huk, Time Acceleration!"

Karma made an elated expression and rushed forward. Then Ark laughed and muttered.

"Racard."

"Ohhhhh, I've been waiting for this. Eeeeeek! Absolute Time!"

Racard seemed like he was vomiting up the skill. There was a roaring sound and all the time magic used by Karma was destroyed.

"Huk, what, what the.....why.....?"

Karma burst out with confusion. He hit Ark's armour with a disbelieving expression but there was no change in the armour. Karma realized that something was wrong and stuttered as he looked at Ark.

"W-wait a minute..... There is something wrong..... I'm just a little tired....."

"Ah, is that so?"

Ark smiled pleasantly at Karma and nodded. Next Ark continuously used Dark Blade. Karma was no problem now that he didn't have his time magic. With Razak and Racard attacking as well, Karma fell into a critical condition within 2 minutes.

"Huk.....I can't die....not like this!"

Karma stumbled and shouted when he had 5% health left. Instantly a weird black air current started forming around Karma's body. Most of the bosses had a special skill they used when in critical condition. Karma's final knockdown skill seemed to be something other than time magic. Ark had the thought too late and rushed forward with 'Jump.'

"It's too late, Dark Blade!"

Kwaaaaaaa, kwaaaaaa!

Then Karma's body split in half and the black smoke went in all different directions.

'Damn, did he finish the skill?'

Ark maintained a defensive stance. But the unexpected message windows appeared in front of him.

-Your level has risen.
------------------------

-Your level has risen.....
----------------------------

'What the? Wasn't Karma's final skill completed? I didn't feel an attack.....'

Anyway, Karma died and his level rose. He felt dissatisfied but Karma died so he didn't pay it any attention. He gained 5 levels after defeating Karma. In addition, he managed to transform 30 junk items into fine items.

"Huhuhu, he was a strange person to the end but it turned out okay."

Ark carefully looked at the items that dropped onto the ground after Karma collapsed.

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Short note regarding Racard's synthesis skill. Nature= Time magic. Property= Accelerate or Rewind.

## Act 9: Rise, Rise 2nd Profession!

Note: I'm going to change the chain skill 'Dark Strike' to 'Dark Torrent.' I had trouble translating this skill but there were two possible interpretations and I went

with Dark Strike. However, that's not possible anymore because there is another skill called Dark Strike so I'm going to change it to Dark Torrent. However, I have no editor anymore so the changes will be slowly made.

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-Phantom Sandglass (Special)

The fallen soul Karma was able to use time magic because of this artifact. Although the origin of the hourglass is unknown, the sands running through it has the power to move time.

When you use the Phantom Hourglass, the time magic will allow you to rewind time or forward it to the future.

However, that effect does not apply to living things.

<The number of uses: 5>

'What is this?'

Ark stared at the hourglass. It was a boss monster. Of course he had hoped for equipment but all he got was a consumable. The Phantom Hourglass. It was an artifact with the power to control time. Although he was initially in an unbearable situation because of it, he discovered a lot of loopholes in its power after fighting Karma. In addition, Ark's opponents were monsters. What use was there in ruining the armour or weapon of a monster? It was possible to use it to recycle junk items.

'But there are only 5 uses.'

What kind of compensation was repairing 5 junk items for defeating a boss monster? Ark sighed with a depressed expression.

'The boss was a little shabby.....'

The compensation was also shabby.

'Well, the artifact still has a unique ability so it might be useful. If I meet a strong boss then I can destroy its armour or weapon. Yes, there is no need to be disappointed. I didn't enter looking for loot.'

Ark collected the Phantom Hourglass and then looked around. He had wandered around the entire crypt and even defeated the boss. The only thing left to do was look for clues about his profession change quest. While he was standing in front of the boss, Buksil's eye approached and said.

“Ark-nim, it continues over on that side.”

His eyes confirmed that there was a small passage behind where he saw Karma for the first time. There was no reason to think about it. Ark entered the passage. He walked for approximately 50 metres. But why was a skeleton suddenly blocking the passage? There was still an enemy remaining after defeating the boss? Ark instantly prepared for battle after discovering the skeleton. But no matter how long he waited, the skeleton didn't make any weird movements.

“This is just a statue?”

The eyeball muttered as it flew around. Just like the eyeball said, the skeleton was just a statue. The statue had numerous bruises on its surface and was standing in a defensive stance with its shield raised in front of it. It stopped people coming in from the outside.....no, the skeleton actually blocked the passage. Although the passage behind it was seen, it wasn't possible to get past the statue.

‘What the, this is? What should I do?’

Despite pushing or pulling, the statue would not budge. Although it didn't look like metal, a metallic sound rang out when he tried to hit it with the sword.

‘Why is the statue in this place? Perhaps this is a clue for my profession quest?’

There was no reason for a statue to be placed here. Ark meticulously looked over the statue. However, the only things visible on the surface of the statue were the bruises.

‘Is this statue really a clue towards my profession quest? Or is it just a statue that was trapped inside? I can't enter because of the statue....ah, that's right.’

“Buksil, go inside and confirm what is there.”

The statue blocked the narrow passage so well that even Racard who had changed into a bat couldn't pass. However, there was enough space for one eyeball to get through. The eyeball became brave after Ark's command and entered the gap. No, it tried to enter. Suddenly red flames rapidly emerged from the eyes of the statue and attacked Ark and the eyeball.

“Huk, what, what the? This guy.....was alive?”

Ark was totally caught off guard and tumbled to the ground as he received a critical hit. At the same time, something similar to iron powder fell from the surface of the statue. After it had all fallen off, the perfect form of the skeleton was revealed. Although its body only consisted of bone, the skeleton emitted a strong force that was completely different from other undead. The skeleton glared at Ark with red eyes and approached.

Clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Razak instantly stood in front of Ark and held up his shield. Kakakakak, sparks flew as iron met iron. But after a short moment, the skeleton pushed forward with his shield and created a shockwave that sent Razak flying.

“Razak! Damn, Racard quickly move him away!”

“U-understood. This way you stupid bones!”

Racard shouted towards the skeleton. The skeleton flinched and stopped running up to Razak. It looked at Razak and Racard dumbly then ran up to Ark and said (?).

Clack clack, clack clack clack clack? Clack clack clack clack!

“Eh? What the? Master, wait a minute!”

Racard shouted with a surprised expression.

“What the? He’s trying to kill us.”

“This guy is asking if Master is the Truthseeker. If you are then he isn’t our enemy. He is the summon of Hero Maban.”

“W-what? Hero Maban’s summon?”

Ark stopped attacking and asked with confusion.

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

“He thinks we were rude for not recognizing a senior.”

Clack clack clack clack! Clack clack? Clack clack clack clack, ttadadak!

“Hehehe, rude? We are honourable pets fighting for our Master. There is no need for us to apologize.”

Racard looked between the two skeletons with no interest and interpreted. Well, Racard was the only one who understood the foreign language so it was good that he was there while the two skeletons were talking. Anyway, Ark looked at the skeleton and remembered the hints for his profession change quest. The person who has forgotten the time in the true darkness will welcome you. The true darkness meant the underground crypt. Hero Maban’s had slept for hundreds of years before Ark appeared in front of him so he had forgotten time.

'All the hints for my quest have been solved. All that's left is to change professions. Then wouldn't the skeleton hold the key for my profession quest?'

Ark was thinking that when something interrupted him. Razak and the skeleton who had been talking suddenly tilted their head to one side and asked.

Clack clack clack? Clack clack clack clack?

"He asked if you've met someone else before meeting him?"

"Meet? Is he talking about Karma?"

"That's right, Karma. He asked how did you do it?"

"I defeated him..... Uh, what? I didn't defeat him?"

Ark asked in a concerned face as the skeleton shook his head. After thinking for a while, the skeleton shook it off and continued talking.

"He asked if you have the qualifications to prove that you are the descendant of Hero Maban."

"This thing?"

Ark pulled out the Three Marvels that had been combined into one disc. The skeleton stared at the disc as he seemed lost in his memories. The atmosphere became heavy as Racard continued interpreting.

"It is a long story. But he will explain the reason why Hero Maban called you here."

The skeleton guided Ark into the passage he had blocked. How long did he follow the skeleton? After 50 metres, a small space the size of a living room appeared. In the corner there was a pile of old ingredients covered in dust and a small spring flowed into a well on one side. The traces showed that someone who wasn't an undead lived there. In the centre of the room there was someone sitting down cross-legged. The dead person just sat down in that position like he was a mummy. Who had lived and died in this place? In addition, why had he died in a lotus position like a monk? While Ark looked doubtful, the skeleton slowly approached and knelt before the dead person before speaking. Whatever he said caused Racard to burst out screaming.

"Heek! M-Master!"

"What the? What is it?" What did he say?"

".....This mummy is.....Hero Maban!"

"What? H-Hero Maban? This mummy?"

Ark looked at the mummy with a stunned expression. It was a name he had been hearing since he started the game, Hero Maban. One of the 7 heroes and the founder of Ark's profession, Dark Walker. But none of the beast clans or even his lover Adelaine knew where he had died. He had turned into a mummy in the underground crypt.....!

"Why on earth? It is impossible for Hero Maban to have died locked in here....."

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack.

"Of course this is Hero Maban."

Racard interpreted and the skeleton instantly sighed and sat down. Ark also sat down on the spot.

*-Clack clack clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack. (I am Anguradon. The undead who protected Hero Maban.)*

Racard sat down on Anguradon's shoulder and simultaneously translated his words. Anguradon struggled with his explanation before talking again.

*-Clack clack, clack clack clack? (Have you looked around the city above the underground crypt?)*

"Yes....I had to find the clues for my profession change quest."

*-Ttadadak, clack clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack. (Then it will be easy to explain. That is the reason why the dying Hero Maban called the Truthseeker here.)*

"Because of the city?"

Ark asked and Anguradon instantly looked upset. Anguradon's subsequent explanation was startling. The original name for the City of the Dead was Oberium. Before the Dark Century occurred, it was a city in Seutandal ruled by a brave warrior. It was also the people of Oberium, who exchanged with the continent while the Nakujuk and Baran were still barbarians in the grassland. It was the reason why there were no records of them in the Baran clan's history. When the Dark Century was at its peak, the kingdom with the strongest forces was Oberium. Compared to the continent, Oberium was invaded but such dark power that it had already become a ruin.

“But why is it like this now?”

*-Clack clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack. (It is because of the terrifying power of the Dark Lord who terrorized the world. It will be easier to watch it then listening to me explain.)*

Then Anguradon took out a memory crystal present in the room. When Ark received the memory crystal, a panorama like picture appeared.

‘This is.....?’

The landscape that appeared was somewhat familiar. Yes, it was looking down on Oberium the city of the dead. The landscape that appeared was from before Oberium had become a ruin. Just like Selebrid the capital city of Schudenberg, Oberium was a huge and gorgeous city. And thousands of Oberium’s soldiers wearing shiny armour in a square. The time period was near the end of the Dark Century. The assembled soldiers had gathered to help the 7 heroes fight against the Dark Lord. They geared up and confirmed their determination. Shortly before they headed to the continent, a dark shadow suddenly crept over their heads. Fear spread over their faces as the warriors raised their heads. Confusion also spread over Ark’s face.

‘T-that, the Rwigenberg!’

Yes, the huge skyray had appeared above the soldier’s heads! It was the aerial fortress Rwigenberg that the red man had seized and disappeared with previously. The warriors mobilized their magic and arrows and waged a war against the Rwigenberg. Then the Rwigenberg’s mouth opened and a black air current flowed out. The warriors enveloped by the black air current screamed and rolled on the ground. And.....the bodies of the warriors started changing slowly.

‘The dead? Doesn’t that look like the dead? Then the dead wandering around Seutandal.....!’

Yes, the identities of the dead wandering Seutandal were the previous residents of Oberium. Here the video was lost as the memory crystal was broken. Unlike the current crystals, the ancient spells on the memory crystal shattered it once it was played once. Anguradon started talking again after the crystal broke.

*-Ttadadadadak, clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack. (The magic you saw was the ultimate curse magic that the Dark Lord created near the end of the Dark Century. The Dark Lord aimed the results of his magical experiments towards Oberium which was the most threatening forces at the time. If he had completed the ultimate destructive magic then the world would’ve ceased to exist.)*

Ark was reminded of words from the Wolrang elder. When the Dark Century was ending, the Dark Lord had sent his most powerful weapon the Rwigenberg to Seutandal. Ark had wandered ‘why?’ when he heard those words but now he knew

the answer to those questions. It made no sense to send the most powerful weapon to attack the Baran clan when the Dark Lord was being threatened by the 7 heroes. But he understood after seeing the contents of the crystal. The Dark Lord had sent the Rwigenberg to stop Oberium from sending reinforcements. Oberium who had ruled Seutandal was completely destroyed and the residents turned into the dead. These dead people were different from the normal undead.

*-Clack clack clack clack.....clack clack clack. (Although Oberium's sacrifice was painful, the 7 heroes were able to defeat the Dark Lord thanks to the absence of the Rwigenberg. But that didn't mean the end of the Dark Century. The 7 heroes.....no, Hero Maban knew that.)*

Anguradon looked at Hero Maban with melancholy eyes then continued.

*-Clack clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack clack. (While everyone was drunk on the joy of victory, Hero Maban was worried about the future. One day the Dark Lord would be resurrected. And if the Dark Lord is resurrected then the world will be threatened by the ultimate curse magic again.)*

The magic that the Dark Lord had completed during the end of the Dark Century had only been used once against Seutandal. The continent had never directly experience the fear so they were unfamiliar with the magic. But Hero Maban knew that the Dark Lord would rise again and threaten the world with his magic. While the other heroes joyfully celebrated on the continent, Hero Maban looked for the door to this dimension by himself and found it. He used the knowledge he gained from fighting against the forces of darkness to study the curse magic. He also did it for Oberium who met a tragic fate right at the end..... But Hero Maban couldn't solve the secret of the magic.

*-Clack clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack clack. (Hero Maban had no choice but to use his final method.)*

Anguradon clenched his fists and looked at Hero Maban. A skeleton.....only bones remained so Anguradon couldn't cry.

*-Clack clack clack, clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack clack. (It was to accept the curse magic into his body in order to find a technique to resist the magic.)*

Ark finally knew the answer to all his questions after hearing Anguradon's words. Yes, he finally realized how Hero Maban had died. He used his own life to figure out the secret to the magic. That was also the reason why he led Ark who was the Truthseeker here. He sacrificed his own life in order to convey the secret of the curse magic to the next generation. That was probably the reason why he hadn't visited the mermaid queen Adelaine like he promised. Just as Ark was thinking this. Adelaine's

necklace that was on his chest started trembling. Ark grabbed the necklace and looked at Hero Maban's remains.

'What's this? Why does it want me to go there?'

It was hundreds of years later yet the necklace was still filled with devotion for him. Why did he purposely cut himself off from the other heroes and his sweetheart? It was impossible for somebody sane to act like that.

Ark honestly couldn't understand his behaviour. No, he didn't want to understand. But he still managed to elicit true devotion from other people. Anguradon also displayed tremendous loyalty to Hero Maban by staying by his side and defending him for hundreds of years.

"Huk huk huk, he is a hero. This guy is a real hero. I'm fiercely impressed. But the descendant of that hero....."

Tears dripped from the eyeball before he looked at Ark. Hero Maban probably hadn't imagined that his descendant would be like this. However, Anguradon didn't know Ark's character and just spoke in an excited voice.

*-Clack clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack clack! (I had been waiting for you. I verified the evidence of Hero Maban's selection with my own eyes. Just like Hero Maban predicted, the Truthseeker has come and he can receive the secret of the curse magic.)*

Anguradon stood up and approached Hero Maban. Then he stared at him with sad eyes before reaching towards the jaw and crushing it. Then the mummy remains turned into dust and two precious stones fell out. One was a shining gem that burned while the other black gem emitted a special aura. Anguradon extended the first shining stone to Ark.

*-Clack clack clack, clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack. (With this it is possible to receive some of the dark magic that Hero Maban left behind. He left some of his experience and power along with the knowledge of the curse he studied. Truthseeker, receive his legacy. Insert it into the Three Marvels and receive his power.)*

'Finally my second profession!'

Ark swallowed his saliva and received the gem. Although he had heard everything about the Dark Lord's resurrection, Ark cared more about his second stage profession. When Ark's trembling hands inserted the precious gem, a tremendous light was emitted from the Three Marvels disc and an information window appeared.

-Hero Maban's soul stone has been combined with the Three Marvels.

As the Truthseeker, you had chased after the footprints of Hero Maban and collected the Three Marvels.

That journey wasn't just to obtain the Three Marvels. Hundreds of years ago, Hero Maban realized the true power of the darkness, stars and moon.....while travelling by himself, he looked at the shining stars and moon in the darkness and realized the meaning of the true night.

He hadn't realized it but it was already embedded deeply in his heart. Hero Maban truly loved the darkness and left his knowledge in the 'Soul Stone,' allowing a Dark Walker to change professions to a Dark Soul.

Would you like to change your profession?

Was that even an impossible choice?

"Change! Change! Change!"

The light that was emitted by the disc was absorbed by Ark's body.

<b>Character Name</b>	Ark	<b>Race</b>	Human
<b>Alignment</b>		Good +450	
<b>Fame</b>	11,725 (+ 500)	<b>Level</b>	344
<b>Profession</b>		Dark Soul	
<b>Title</b>		Cat Knight, Caretaker of the World Tree, Jackson's Hero, Great Adventurer, Magic Institute Member, Seutandal's Hero	
<b>Health</b>	5,405 (+150) <+1000>	<b>Mana</b>	5,445 <+1000>
<b>Spiritual Power</b>	200	<b>Strength</b>	672 (+28) <+40>
<b>Agility</b>	832 (+55) <+50>	<b>Stamina</b>	1,032 (+20) <+40>
<b>Wisdom</b>	Wisdom 118 (+10) <+40>	<b>Intelligence</b>	1061 <+50>
<b>Luck</b>	112 (+60) <+40>	<b>Flexibility</b>	146
<b>Art of Communication</b>	66	<b>Affection</b>	67 (+10)

Resilience	428		
Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics		153	
Added Profession Effect			
<div>* Your profession restrictions have been released and your profession-specific skills have been upgraded to a higher level.</div> <div>* You’ve acquired the special skill ‘Area Declaration’: Glory of the Night acquired.</div> <div>* Your profession restrictions have loosened and you have successfully learnt the highest rank skill ‘Divine Skill.’</div> <div>* Your profession-specific skills have been upgraded to a higher level.</div> <div>* The proficiency and rating of your previous skills have been upgraded.</div>			
<div>【Dark Strike】 : Upgraded version of Dark Blade.</div> <div>It has inherited the effects of Dark Blade by default. However, whenever you use Dark Strike then the power of darkness will be accumulated in the sword. It is possible to accumulate the power from 2-5 times before inflicting a critical hit on the enemy.</div> <div>&lt;Number of accumulations x 50% of attack is added. Mana consumption: 200&gt;</div> <div>【Blade Tempest】 : Upgraded version of Blade Storm.</div> <div>It has inherited the effects of Blade Storm by default. However, when a magic sword is used for Blade Tempest then the effect will be even greater and there will be a helpful effect for allies.</div> <div>&lt;The explosion will depend on the special effects of the sword. Mana consumption: 800&gt;</div> <div>【Dark Scale】 : Upgraded version of Dark Dance.</div> <div>Skill will be automatically used when degree of completion is 70%. Darkness will be assimilated in the body and will display an armour like effect. The dark armour will decrease your evasion by 20% but will increase your defense by 30%, and there is an increased 10% of reflecting the enemy’s attack. In addition, any dark magic will be invalidated if the damage is less than 100.</div> <div>&lt;Dark Scale will increase your defense. Mana consumption: 500&gt;</div> <div>【Moonlight Illusion】 : Upgraded version of Moonlight Shadow.</div> <div>The maximum health of the moonlight shadow clones will increase from 30% to 40%. In addition, you can move the clones using simple commands. The number of</div>			

clones and commands will depend on the skill rating. (Current number of clones is 3 and the number of instructions is 3)

\* Attack everything: Take every action to fight the enemy until their health disappears.

\* Take suitable action: A suitable defense and offense will be taken until their health disappears.

\* Be careful of your lives: run away until their health disappears.

-You have learnt the high ranking skill 'Glory of the Night.'

Glory of the Night <Area Declaration> (Beginner, Active): Glory of the Night is a special area declaration skill which fences off a certain area that will give you special powers within that area.

When inside an area declared by Glory of the Night, a Dark Soul can summon a stone imbued with the power of darkness. When present in a 100 metre radius, the power of darkness will increase your attack and defense by 50% and magic resistance by 20%. In addition, you will only be able to use the high ranking skill 'Divine Skill' with the area declared. However, the Dark Soul will only be able to use the area declaration at night or until the dark stone is destroyed.

<Duration lasts for 10 minutes.

Mana consumption: 2,000

Spiritual Power consumption: 400>

'Finally my second profession!'

Ark looked at the information window with an impressed face. While he was still reading the information, Anguradon handed him the black precious gem and spoke.

*-Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack. (Hero Maban who had sacrificed his life made preparations to pass on his knowledge. Come on, take this. Please accomplish Hero Maban's last wish.)*

"That.....is mine!"

Then a dark shadow abruptly flew from the passage towards the gem. Ark was completely caught off guard while his summons looked on with confusion. But it seemed like Anguradon had already expected as he turned his body and hit the dark spirit with his shield.

“Kuaaaak....how.....?”

*-Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack clack. (Did you think I'd never know your interior motive? If you had been destroyed then I would've died as well. My living existence is proof that you were alive.)*

“So it was like that....?”

*-Clack clack clack, ttadadadak, ttadak. (Yes, I just pretended that I didn't know anything. It was in order to convey Hero Maban's knowledge to the Truthseeker. But everything is over and I have no business anymore. I had been waiting for this day. There is no use trying to escape. You and I are one body. My duty is over so I have no lingering wish to remain in this world.)*

Anguradon swung his sword at the black spirit which fell to the ground. Then the black aura flared and it escaped at an absurd speed outside.

“Kuaaaak! No. Like this.....I can't die..... If it's like this.....I won't die alone..... The seal has loosened.....I'll drive this place to eternal ruin!”

*-Clack! Clack clack clack clack! (Damn, did I miss?)*

“What's going on? Who is he?”

*-Clack clack clack clack. (He is Karma.)*

“Karma? But I already killed him.....”

*-Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack, clack clack. (No, he did not die. He just pretended to die. The fact that I'm alive is the evidence. Because that fellow and I were born from one body.)*

Anguradon suddenly revealed a new secret. Karma was Anguradon's alter ego. After Hero Maban absorbed the curse magic, Anguradon had been watching over him for hundreds of years. Although Anguradon was an undead, he was still affected by the influence of the curse magic. Anguradon gradually started to covet the gem inserted into Hero Maban's body. In order to escape the effect of the magic, Anguradon was forced to reassemble his body using the bones from the crypt. But the bones that Anguradon removed became another living existence. It was just a body with a dreadful desire for the precious gem. Karma. Yes, Karma was just like his name. In a previous life, he had fallen into sin and his body became corrupted. Karma was literally the desire that Anguradon had shed! Anyway, Anguradon turned himself into a statue at the entrance of the passage in order to block

Karma. Karma's main body had been destroyed so the only thing keeping him here after hundreds of years was Anguradon.

*-Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack! Ttadak! (We have to hurry. He'll go on a desperate rampage after he failed to obtain the gem. That fellow has accumulated his magic for hundreds of years. If he goes outside in this situation then there is no telling what he will do. Ugh!)*

Anguradon said in a desperate voice before he suddenly moaned and sat on the ground. His legs had weakened before it changed into powder and scattered.

"What happened?"

*-Clack clack clack.....clack clack clack.....clack clack clack clack! (He....the guy is disappeared. He also knows it. So he is creating explosions in the city. You have to stop him!)*

Anguradon handed him the gem and said.

*-Clack clack, clack clack clack! (Although it is vexing, I'm stuck here. I am near Hero Maban. Before it is too late.....stop that fellow from going to the outside!)*

Ark still didn't fully understand what was going on but he didn't question it closely. Ark received the precious gem. Then the gem melted into a liquid and wound around his body. It changed into a tattoo with a geometrical design that wrapped around both arms until his shoulders.

The power of the precious gem has been absorbed into your body.

Hero Maban truly loved this world and researched ways to oppose the darkness that threatened it until his very last breath. Unfortunately, that power is still unfinished.

Furthermore, his successor to the Dark Soul profession is too immature to understand the necessary spiritual enlightenment.

Fortunately, Hero Maban had foreseen this. His successor's indication of his enlightenment is in the form of a tattoo. When you have obtained sufficient knowledge and experience in the soul stone, the tattoo will expand. When all the powers are opened then you will gain the full ability to fight against the darkness.

-You have awakened the ability 'Eternal Soul.'

When you receive enlightenment related to the Dark Soul, the powers of the 'soul' will be absorbed into the tattoo. The 'soul' tattoo consists of 10 stages. If you absorb all of the 'soul' magic then you will acquire the knowledge that Hero Maban exchanged his life for. The biggest goal of a Dark Soul is to absorb all this 'soul.'

‘Eternal soul? Then Eternal Soul is another power of a Dark Soul?’

Ark’s head became complicated as he read the information window. Ark had finally changed to his secondary profession after many twists and turns. But half of Hero Maban’s true strength lay in Eternal Soul. He had to find special enlightenment of clues and loosen 10 seals. Why did he feel like this was just the start? In fact, he hadn’t paid much attention to the curse magic that the Dark Lord used but that changed now that he had the tattoos.

‘Anyway, that means I can become stronger?’

Ark understood as much as he could and decided to move on. There was no time to think about the skills and abilities he got from his secondary profession. There was no guarantee what Karma would do outside.

*-Clack clack clack clack, clack clack clack! (Hurry. You have to stop him before my body totally collapses!)*

“Okay, let’s go!”

Ark used Sprint and ran outside. Just as he was about to be followed by Razak.

*-Clack clack.....clack clack. (The Truthseeker’s summon.....wait a minute)*

Razak stopped and turned around. Anguradon looked at him before taking one bone from his ribs.

*-Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack! Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack. (This is the token of friendship I received from Hero Maban when we made the contract for the first time. I’ve kept it all my life. Although I’ve changed my body after it became corrupted, this part has stayed the same for hundreds of years. Hero Maban gave his knowledge to your Master so I wanted to give this to you.)*

Anguradon passed him the rib bone and sighed.

*-Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack, ttadadak. (I can see the anguish in your eyes. In the past you lost the person who you’ve sworn allegiance to and now you have a new Master. I know. I’ve also had the same doubt after I evolved as an undead.)*

Razak shook slightly at Anguradon’s words. In fact, Razak had been anguished for a long time. The only memory Razak had was of ‘loyalty.’ But when he was revived as an undead, the place he woke up was a dungeon. He had no doubts while he was a skull, but his intelligence increased after he evolved and he became confused about

his identity. Anguradon who had lived for hundreds of years had seen through Razak's anguish.

*-Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack clack! (But you don't have to hesitate even if you don't know the past. You're not living in the past anymore. You exist in the presence and have received a new name with a new master. Your faith is the only truth. Go, serve your master!)*

Anguradon finished talking and lay on the ground. Every time he moved a bone had disappeared and it was already difficult for him to hold on. But Anguradon wasn't even paying attention to his broken body and kept moving. He was heading towards the place where Hero Maban's remains was scattered. Anguradon had lost both arms and legs before he reached his Master's corpse and muttered in a hoarse voice.

*-Ttadadadak, ttadadadak, clack clack clack clack.....(Ohhhh, Master.....now.....now I can go to your side. I've waited for hundreds of years. I will hear the words 'you did well' from you....this moment.....this moment.....)*

Anguradon's eyes became cloudy as he slowly disappeared. His body turned into powder which piled on top of Hero Maban's remains. Razak silently looked at them and kneeled down. Then he disassembled a rib bone and inserted the one received from Anguradon.

-Razak has used his 'Bone Collector' skill to reassemble the ribs.

<Loyalty +200>

-Your summon Razak has collected a special bone and learnt a new skill.

Steel Loyalty (Special racial skill, Active): The skeleton Anguradon's ultimate defense skill. When skill is used, the bones will change to steel and defense will increase by degree of loyalty (Current Loyalty: 894). However, this skill can only be used when you are within 10 metres of your summon and it only used to protect the summon.

<Cool down time: 8 hours. Mana consumption: 300>

Kwaaaaaaa, kwaaaaaa!

"What, what the? What is Karma doing?"

Ark looked around with a bemused expression after exiting the crypt. It was the City of the Dead. No, Oberium was embroiled in a storm. The enormous storm emitted a

black aura. But there were no tremors in the earth. The storm only affected the dead present in Oberium.

“Kuaaaaak!”

One of the dead screamed with pain and rolled across the ground as he was wrapped in a black aura. After a short time, the body of the dead swelled like a balloon. A white gas also rose from the body of the dead. It looked like the person was becoming a transparent gas. Yes, it was the soul of the residents of Oberium that had been stuck in the flesh of the dead for hundreds of years. The soul appeared grey when it emerged from the body and soon became a part of the storm.

‘Are the souls being swallowed by the darkness to strengthen it?’

“Aaaaaak, help me!”

The other dead were terrified and ran all over the place. They couldn’t grasp the situation but instinctively sensed the danger.

‘What am I going to do?’

He couldn’t just do nothing. Karma was definitely the one who caused this curse. Although the identity of the sphere wasn’t confirmed yet, Ark instinctively knew. The huge black sphere in the centre of Oberium became increasingly bigger as it swallowed more souls. Ark couldn’t imagine the damage that would occur once it reached its limit. It was his hunch. But he couldn’t think of what he should do.

‘Do I have to attack that black sphere?’

Ark was thinking that when something interrupted him. Ttadadadak! He abruptly heard a sound from behind him. It was Razak who had finally exited the crypt after being delayed by Anguradon. But as soon as Razak came outside to Oberium, he screamed and rolled on the ground. Ark realized that the situation was more serious than he thought.

“T-this!”

He had carelessly forgotten about it. Razak was an undead living in Oberium. If the dead was affected then wouldn’t Razak be affected as well? And in the end the dead were swallowed by the black air current. What if Razak faced the same situation.....?

“Damn, it can’t be.

Curses emerged from Ark's mouth.

TO BE CONTINUED

**[End of Book 14]**